



## ON WINGS OF TERROR

HELP! MY BABY WAS ABDUCTED BY AN EAGLE!

MONTAUK MYTHS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND STRANGER THINGS

MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU PUTIN VERSUS DARTH VADER

GRAPPLING WITH GHOSTS INJURIES FROM THE OTHER SIDE

DEAD DRAGON • CRASH-LANDING WIZARD • TUNNELLING FOR GOD • PIGLET PRODIGY

THE WORLD OF

STRANGE PHENOMENA

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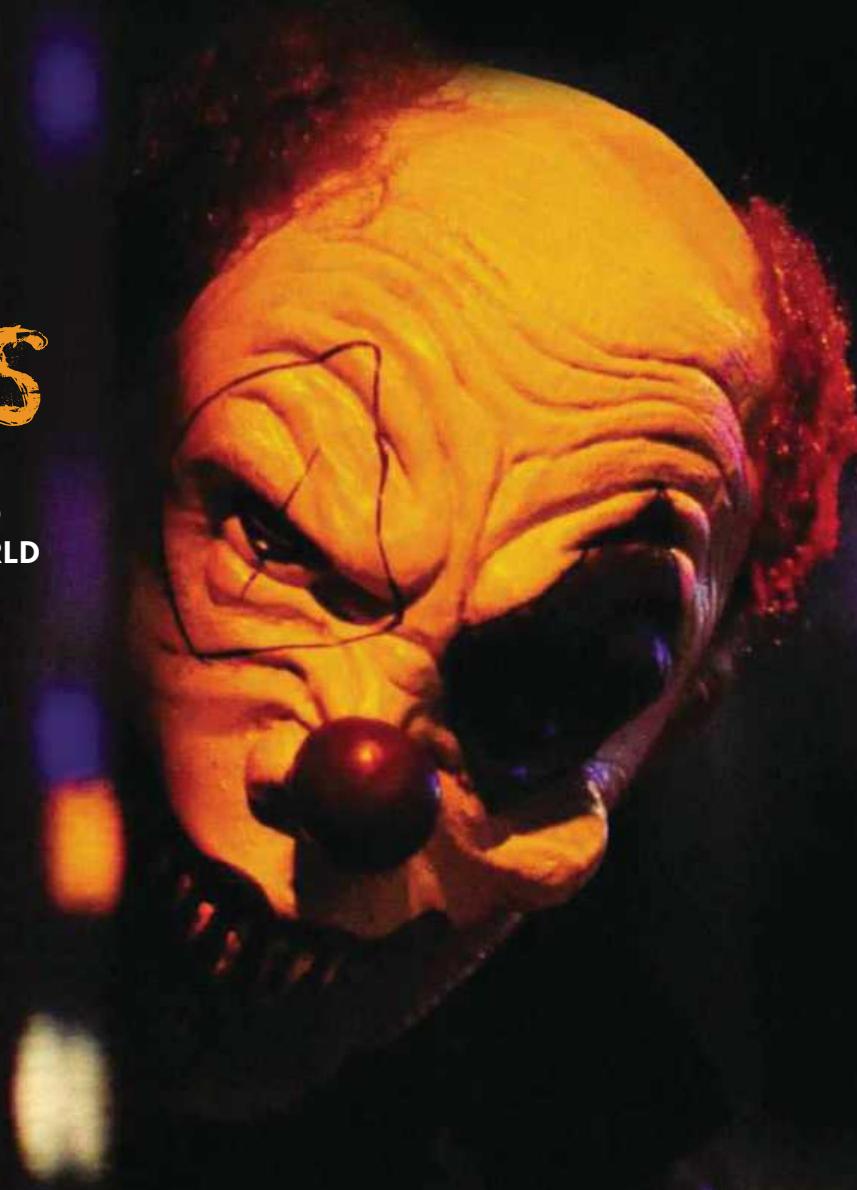
THE  
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WEIRDEST  
NEWS

# Forteantimes

FT347 DECEMBER 2016 £4.25

## ATTACK OF THE KILLER CLOWNS

THE CREEPY CRAZE THAT STARTED IN AMERICA AND SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD



## SECRETS AND WIVES

MORMON POLYGAMY IN THE UNITED STATES

## TALES FROM THE CRYPT

MOVING COFFINS AND UNQUIET GRAVES





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NETFLIX



GEORGE REY / GETTY IMAGES

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This autumn has seen creepy clowns on the march as the craze spread from the US to Europe and beyond, with schools on alert, threats on social media, and increasingly violent altercations. **PAUL SIEVEKING** grapples with a tsunami of sightings to bring you the most comprehensive collation of current coulromania yet assembled.

### 36 SECRETS AND WIVES

Mormonism has been claimed as the fastest-growing religion in the USA – but can a church whose breakaway sects practise illegal polygamous marriage and preach violent 'blood atonement' really shape the American future? **DR EDWARD DUTTON** joined some old college friends for a working holiday among America's polygamist Mormons to try and find out.

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The *Illustrated Police News* never shied away from a sensational story, and in this feature-length instalment in our series **JAN BONDESON** looks at how abductions by eagles were reported by the "worst newspaper in Britain" and assesses the truth behind the headlines.

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# editorial

## Year of the clown

### JUST CLOWNING AROUND?

Once upon a time, collecting reports of creepy clown sightings was a fairly outré pursuit. That has all changed over the past weeks: a few days before Hallowe'en, and we are still wading through news clippings dominated by creepy, stalking and, increasingly, violent clowns. Quite what has brought about this exponential growth and startling geographical spread – the craze has reached Germany as we go to press – in what was previously a regular but generally localised and small-scale phenomenon is hard to say. After all, the creepy clown has been a popular bogeyman since John Wayne Gacy made the headlines and Stephen King's Pennywise scared a whole generation; and awareness of the double-edged nature of clowning stretches much further back into the past.

Social media appear to have been a key factor, playing a major role in spreading the creepy clown craze in a number of ways. Pictures and videos (often recycled from earlier incidents) have gone viral, making more and more people aware of the phenomenon, but Facebook and Twitter have also provided the perfect platform for the posting of threats that are then quickly disseminated, adding to the growing sense of panic that has gripped a number of communities.

Many of these will have been little more than irresponsible pranks carried out by bored teenagers; but it seems that in spreading the creepy clown 'meme' online some sort of chain reaction has been set off, with a growing number of people donning grotesque masks and scaring the living daylights out of both children and adults. A small number of cases appear to have escalated into threats of violence and in some instances actual physical harm. We now have reports of victims being attacked with sticks or knives, while in other cases, would-be killer clowns have come off worse when their intended targets have fought back; in an unfortunate incident in Berlin, a 14-year-old stabbed his clown tormentor only to discover it was a 16-year-old acquaintance.

Here in the UK, there are suggestions that trick or treating should be banned this year and children kept safely at home; meanwhile, back in the USA the 'clown epidemic' continues and we hear that a new poll shows that Americans "admit to being more scared of clowns than

they are of climate change, terrorism, and even death." ([www.sciencealert.com](http://www.sciencealert.com), 25 Oct 2016). Paul Sieveking presents his full round-up of the ongoing scare on p28.

### WHEN EAGLES ATTACK...

In Victorian times, it was eagles you had to worry about; at least according to that inexhaustible source of strange and sensational stories, the *Illustrated Police News*. In a special feature-length instalment of the series (p44), Jan Bondeson presents a round-up of cases in which these magnificent birds of prey are said to have snatched young children from under the eyes of their terrified parents and fed them to their young in the nest. Eagle attacks continue to make the news, in fact, and we present a selection of recent cases involving children, dogs and even a young kangaroo on p6.



One of the most famous images from the annals of eagle abductions: the sad fate of five-year-old Marie Delex, said to have been abducted and killed by a golden eagle in the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland.

### ERRATA

**FT345:70-71:** In Mike Prentis's letter More things in Heaven and Earth...”, the Neil Armstrong quotation should be: “I can see sky all around the Moon, even on the rim of it, where there's no earthshine or sunshine [not moonshine].” As Mike explained, this was “an error made by the word processor on my tablet. It does insist on printing what it thinks I mean!”

**FT346:51:** FR Maher's report on the #FolkloreThursday symposium refers to a talk on urban prehistory by Kevin Brophy. In fact, it was given by Kenny Brophy of the University of Glasgow, who points out that Kevin Brophy is “an American actor who starred in *The Magic of the Golden Bear: Goldy III*. No relation.”

DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING



## Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

**SEE PAGE 78**

# LISTEN

IT JUST MIGHT CHANGE YOUR LIFE



UCBPLAYER

LIVE | CATCH UP | ON DEMAND

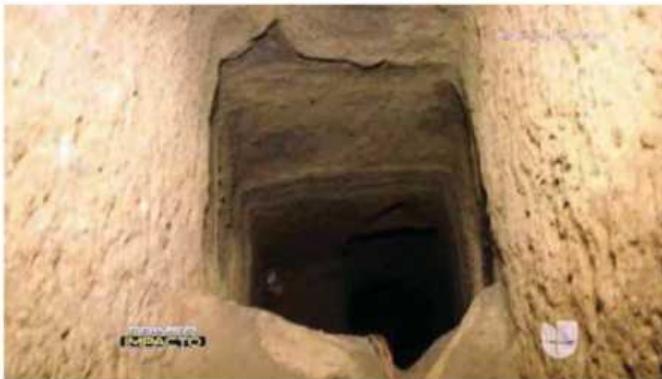




# strangedays

## Dig that hole!

Human moles and their mysterious tunnels



ABOVE: Mr Sanchez's hole. BELOW: 'Burro' Schmidt and his tunnel.

Every day since God told him to do it, 18 years ago, 69-year-old Santiago Sanchez from western El Salvador goes down a hole into the tunnel he has been digging. He spends the whole day, from 3am onwards, carving away at the rough service, finally exiting with around 90lb (40kg) of rock and debris. Though many call him crazy, he is determined to fulfil his mission, even though he admits he doesn't understand its purpose. He compares his work to that of Noah, who also received a command from God and was laughed at by people who didn't believe him and refused to help. Journalist Ernesto Rivas recently went down the tunnel to see how long it had become, but had to exit before reaching the end, due to respiratory problems. That didn't surprise Santiago, who said: "Only I am allowed to go to the end, because I am God's tunnel digger."

The mysterious hole has become known as the Tunnel of God, and people sometimes stop by to visit it. However, no one but Sanchez has reached its end, as he seems to be the only one untroubled by the low level of oxygen on the deeper levels.

### No one but Sanchez has reached the tunnel's end

Sanchez says he'll continue his work until he gets another message from God or until he dies. He claims the Lord has promised him a gift when he finally completes his task.



- This is reminiscent of William Henry 'Burro' Schmidt, aka "the human mole", who spent 32 years single-handedly digging a 2,087ft (636m) tunnel through the granite of Copper Mountain, in the Mojave Desert's El Paso range. It emerges on a high ledge, in the middle of nowhere. Schmidt never talked much about it. When questioned, he simply replied that it was a shortcut – to where, no one knows.

Schmidt migrated to the California desert from Rhode Island in the late 19th century, in order to improve his health. He is believed to have started digging the tunnel in 1902, near the site where he had staked a mining claim. He excavated with picks, hammers, hand drills and explosives, removing rubble with a wheelbarrow. At times, he even carried it out on his back. Eventually, he installed iron tracks and a mine car. He lived alone and had a reputation for being a miser – he would mend his clothes with flour sacks and his shoes with crushed tin cans. Many times, he was seriously injured by his own explosions while digging the tunnel, because he was too frugal to use a long fuse. At one point, the locals called him 'Jackass Schmidt', and later in life he took on the

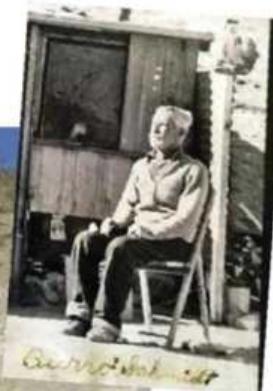
name 'Burro'.

Until this day, the Burro Schmidt tunnel is still a source of great mystery and awe. Everyone who has been to the tunnel will vouch for the fact that Schmidt knew what he was doing. He had no formal training and picked up most of the skills required for the job while doing it, but the accuracy of his work is unmistakable. Still, the question remains – why?

During Schmidt's digging years, there were wild rumours about a rich ore deposit or vein of gold – but he lived a life so simple that the theory of hidden treasure doesn't add up. Speculation was that Schmidt needed a shortcut to bring his gold ore from the mine to the market; but when the construction of a new road made his effort unnecessary, he still chose to continue the backbreaking work. He might have started out as a treasure seeker, but a few years in, he might have just kept going in order to allow his body to break under the force of the desert. No one knows if he ever struck gold, but when he broke through to daylight in 1938, he simply walked away from his life's work.

Stooped and gnarled from 32 years of rigorous tunnelling, he packed up and left Copper Mountain to live the last part of his life in a nearby town. Later, he took on a partner named Mike Lee, and together they gave visitors tours of the tunnel. He died in 1954. Although located in a remote area, the tunnel is a huge tourist attraction. It is

structurally sound and you can walk upright through its entire length in about half an hour. When you reach the ledge at the end of the tunnel, a spectacular view awaits. [oddbitycentral.com](http://oddbitycentral.com), 29 Oct 2014, 29 Sept 2016.





## PRODIGIOUS BIRTHS

Unusual animal arrivals prompt very different reactions

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## SCRATCHED BY SPOOKS

Can violent ghost attacks inflict injuries from the other side?

PAGE 16



## AFRICAN WONDERS

Naked wizard crash lands in church and other odd tales

PAGE 18

# The ConspiraspHERE

This month, NOEL ROONEY ponders the mysterious death of conspiracy theorist Max Spiers, and wonders why the mainstream media have had more to say than the conspiracy websites

The untimely death of Max Spiers, ufologist and conspiracy researcher, has excited a certain amount of interest in both the mainstream and alternative media. The timing is curious: Spiers died in mid-July, in Poland, and the story broke in mid-October, almost exactly three months afterwards. Equally curious is the scale and curve of interest: most of the UK's mainstream media outlets carried the story, but the ConspiraspHERE was less than universally stimulated.

The tragic death of a reportedly fit and healthy 39-year-old in a Warsaw apartment, and the odd circumstances of his death (he apparently vomited a black liquid shortly before his demise, and had texted his mother to say he was in trouble, and that, if he died, she should investigate) ought to have been sufficient to get the conspiracy community up in arms and demanding justice. The relatively muted response leaves this writer wondering what else is going on; did Spiers have enemies or rivals in the conspiracy world who didn't want his story told? Are the conspiracists as sceptical of the story as the Polish authorities appear to be? Most online 'alternative' sources merely quote the mainstream stories, and the high-profile sites, such as David Icke's, barely pay it any attention.

The timing strongly suggests that some trigger other than Spiers's death broke the story; I found no obvious reason for this among the spread of stories (few of which carried unique details) and am left assuming that this is the product of a campaign by family or friends to raise the profile of the episode, perhaps in response to the Foreign Office's refusal to take the matter up with the Polish authorities, who do seem to have treated the incident with a degree of official insouciance amounting to criminal lethargy.

There are rumours online that Spiers was about to expose a Satanic cabal among the British elite; but he wouldn't be the first to do so, and unless he had actually found explosive new evidence, it seems an unlikely motive for assassination. Other sources suggest he was going to announce

'something big' at a planned lecture in Warsaw on the subject of UFOs; but again, this happens on a weekly basis, and the Men in Black don't off the author of every new revelation (in fact, they don't off anyone in the UK, according to the reassuring Nick Pope, and he would know, wouldn't he?).

There are hints in the media narrative (although these remain largely unexplored) that his death could have been from natural causes. Vomiting black bile sounds exotic and sinister, but it can be the result of alcohol poisoning, or taking medicines in combination; and Spiers was reportedly suffering from migraine (so presumably taking strong painkillers) and taking antibiotics for some other unidentified ailment. This makes his death no less tragic but undermines the assassination theories somewhat. On the other hand, there is the matter of his text messages, and – according to his fiancée, also a conspiracy researcher – he had received death threats recently. So there is grist for a conspiratorial mill here, albeit of mixed calibre.

Like rock stars, alternative researchers who die young often provoke instant speculation that gathers into posthumous mythology; human tragedy morphs into nebulous historical mystery. In this case the mystery, ultimately, is why the mainstream media seem so much more interested in milking the myth than the ConspiraspHERE itself. I sincerely hope that Max Spiers's family and friends find some suitable closure, and are not left hanging in a liminal space between inaccurate mainstream media glee and an odd reluctance to engage from the ConspiraspHERE.

[www.express.co.uk/news/uk/724025/Conspiracy-theories-UFO-Max-Spiers-death-Warsaw-killed-silence](http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/724025/Conspiracy-theories-UFO-Max-Spiers-death-Warsaw-killed-silence)  
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## EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### Aliens land in Arbury

Cambridge News, 15 June 2015.

### Terrifying bug claims accountant

(Queensland) Courier-Mail, 8 Aug 2015.

### Date-rape dwarf guru jailed over sex attacks

Metro, 30 July 2015.

### Dinosaur found in cupboard under stairs

Cambridge News, 15 June 2015.



Dundee Courier & Advertiser, 25 July 2015

## SIDELINES...

### **SIMIAN SABOTEUR**

A monkey caused a nationwide blackout in Kenya on 7 June after falling onto equipment at a power station. The white-collared monkey, thought to be a vervet, hit a transformer at the Gitatu hydroelectric plant, causing it to trip and leading to the loss of 180 megawatts of power. It took almost four hours for services to be restored. The simian saboteur survived and was passed to wildlife services. *D.Mail, Int. NY Times, 9 June 2016.*

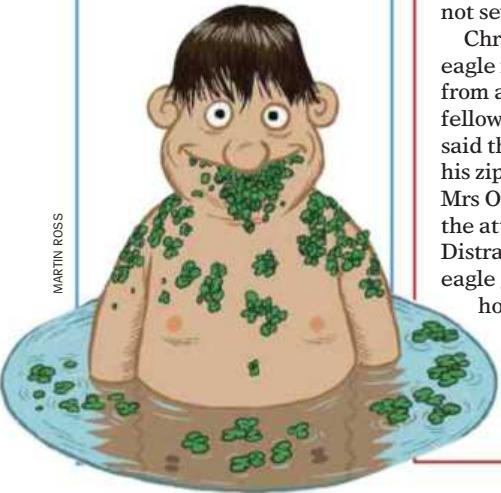
### **NO EXIT**

When Jörg and Anita Hagemann, both in their late seventies, tried to leave their ground floor flat in Bochum, Germany, they opened their front door to find the way blocked by breezeblocks. It was the work of their landlady after a dispute over the rent. The elderly couple called the police, who ordered the landlady to remove the breezeblocks immediately. *D.Telegraph, 14 July 2016.*

### **DUCKWEED SOLUTION?**

A plant that thrives in ponds, rivers and canals could help solve the problem of world hunger. Fast-growing duckweed has 10 times the protein content of soy. Tests are ongoing into whether it can be farmed and digested by humans. Tens of thousands of tons were removed from London's canals in one week last July. *Sun, 30 July 2016.*

MARTIN ROSS



## EAGLES ATTACK!

RAPTORS BEHAVING BADLY DOWN UNDER, WHILE DUTCH POLICE PUT THEIRS TO WORK



### **EAGLE TRIES TO SNATCH BOY**

On 6 July, a wedge-tailed eagle tried to fly away with a terrified boy at a popular wildlife show at Alice Springs Desert Park in central Australia. A crowd of stunned onlookers watched the enormous bird latch its talons on to the screaming boy's head and attempt to pick him up "like a small animal". The boy – believed to be between six and eight years old – escaped with a "superficial" gash to his face. He was left crying and bleeding, but his injuries were not severe.

Christine O'Connell said the eagle flew straight for the boy from about 50ft (15m) away. "A fellow who was sitting closer said the little boy kept running his zipper up and down," said Mrs O'Connell, who caught the attack on her camera. Distracted by the noise, the eagle grabbed the boy's green hoodie and attempted to lift him away before park staff moved in. *BBC News, 12 July 2016.*



TOP: The moment that the wedge-tailed eagle tried to snatch a child is caught on camera. ABOVE: Constable Scott Mason with Cuejo, who survived a similar attack.



KOEN VAN WEEL / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

**EAGLE ABDUCTS JOEY**

A six-month-old kangaroo was in a yard at Burrinjuck Community Police Station in outback Western Australia on 27 April when it was seized by a wedge-tailed eagle, lifted over a 2m (7ft) fence and carried away. Named Cuejo, the 'roo had been adopted by Constable Scott Mason after its mother was hit and killed by a truck in early March. Mason gave chase and managed to rescue Cuejo after the eagle landed. The shocked joey had two puncture wounds and a lot of fur missing from its neck. [arbroath.blogspot.co.uk](http://arbroath.blogspot.co.uk), 3 May 2016.

**EAGLE GRABS DOG**

Deb Auld of Ipswich, Queensland, took her daughter's pet Chihuahua Bella for a quick pee in the paddock at Ripley when a large wedge-tailed eagle approached from behind her and tried to take off with the dog. Fortunately, it lost its grip, but not before causing serious injury to the precious family pooch. "All I saw was wings and feathers flying everywhere," said Mrs Auld. "The whole thing was over in a few seconds, but the eagle ripped the muscle and skin



EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

**ABOVE:** Dutch police are adopting a centuries-old pursuit to resolve the modern-day problem of increasing numbers of drones in the skies, becoming the world's first force to employ eagles as winged warriors.

away from Bella's spine. The vet said the injuries were horrific." However, Bella was expected to make a full recovery. *Queensland Times*, 19 Sept 2015.

**EAGLES VERSUS DRONES**

The Dutch National Police force has begun

training eagles to intercept troublesome drones during an emergency, when another capture device might put people below at risk. Once in sight, the bird flies toward its mechanical prey, snatches it with its enormous talons and then takes it to safe place. [engadget.com](http://engadget.com), 1 Feb 2016.

**SIDELINES...****SOMEHOW APPROPRIATE**

A freight train that came off the rails in Charles City, Iowa, at 4am on 9 August rolled into a trackside tavern called Derailed. One carriage spilled grain into the bar, causing £7,700 worth of damage. [AP] 9 Aug 2016.

**STINGRAY STRIKE**

A fisherman was left bleeding heavily after a stingray he landed in Herne Bay, Kent, lashed out and injected him with its venom. The 16in (40cm) critter severed a vein in the 28-year-old's arm with its barbed spine. He ran to a doctor's surgery before being taken to hospital. *Sun*, 16 July 2016.

**DEAD PRICEY**

A 95 per cent complete dodo skeleton – pieced together from bones collected over 40 years – will be auctioned by Summers Place Auctions in West Sussex on 22 November, when it is expected to fetch £500,000. The dodo went extinct around 1680. The last one to come under the hammer went to Cardiff Museum in 1914 for £350. A handful of almost complete skeletons are in museums. Most come from bones found in a Mauritian swamp in 1865 and all but one are composites of bones from a number of birds. *D.Mail, Telegraph*, 26 Aug 2016.

**DARING THEFTS**

A farmer on New Zealand's South Island lost 500 cows, rustled unnoticed from his farm near Ashburton sometime in July or August. Around 24 August, 250 rare-breed ducks went missing from a poultry farm near Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire. Peter and Julie Vine planted 127 trees to blot out traffic noise from the A227 in Wrotham, Kent, but they were stolen overnight on 19 August. A week later, 25 laurel bushes, each 6ft (1.8m) tall, disappeared overnight from a garden in Copthorne, West Sussex. *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 Aug; <i>25 Aug; [AP] *D.Express*, 30 Aug 2016.



## SIDELINES...

### SAVED BY DREAM

A group of bowlers won a last-minute reprieve from Stewart Smith who scaled back his business plans after his grandfather Frank (who was a bowler with the club) appeared to him in a dream and told him to save the green. Members of Newsome Community Sports and Bowling Club, West Yorkshire, had been locked in a dispute with Smith since he secured a two-year option on the site. *D.Telegraph*, 16 April 2016.

### TALLEST DANDELION

In an effort to stop a dandelion growing in his garden in Bowthorpe, Norfolk, Wayne Daniels snapped the stalk, but this just caused a growth spurt so that it topped 7ft (213cm), beating the world record of 6ft 4in (193cm) set in Canada in 2011. *D.Telegraph*, 3 Aug 2016.

### LIGHTNING MASSACRES

In probably the worst case of its kind, 322 wild reindeer, including 70 calves, were killed by lightning in central Norway on 26 August. Aerial footage showed carcasses scattered across a small area on the Hardangervidda mountain plateau. About a week earlier, 38 sheep were killed by lightning in the Indian district of Kanchipuram. The previous deadliest lightning strike involving livestock was in 2005, when 68 cows were killed in Australia. *nrk.no*, 28 Aug; <i> 30 Aug 2016.

MARTIN ROSS



## MISCELLANIA

FORTEAN NEWS WE COULDN'T FIT ANYWHERE ELSE:  
BIKER SPIRIT PHOTO AND METEORITE SURPRISE



### BIKER'S SPIRIT?

Many people think a Kentucky man captured a supernatural moment when he took a picture of a fatal motorbike crash on Highway 15 between Campton and Stanton, Kentucky, on 12 July 2016. Saul Vazquez (right) said his father took the picture from the cab of his truck. It appears to show the



faint outline of a figure hovering over the accident scene. The biker later died in hospital (but presumably after the photograph was taken, suggesting the outlined figure cannot be the biker's departing spirit.) [CNN] 14 July 2016.

### HOT ROCK LANDS

David Stevenson, 46, of Bramley, Leeds, West Yorkshire, nipped out for a late-night cigarette on 10 August and noticed a glowing projectile giving off wisps of smoke had landed next to his back fence. The following morning, he found the rock, 4in (10cm) long and about the size of two tennis balls, surrounded by scorched grass about a metre in diameter. It was still giving off enough heat to light a cigarette. He found it to be magnetic, suggesting it had come from space.

"There have been very few meteorites discovered shortly after their impact so this is an extremely rare case if it turns out to be one," said astronomer

Matt Robinson, who works for the Kielder Observatory Astronomical Society in Northumberland. He denied the rock might have come from the Perseid meteor shower. "The shower happens because we pass through the trail of comet Swift Tuttle," he said. "The pieces of debris that pepper the atmosphere of the Earth from the comet will be no larger than a ping pong ball and will not survive their fall. It is more likely that the rock David found is a sporadic meteorite from the asteroid belt in between Mars and Jupiter. It is probably at least four billion years old." *Yorkshire Eve. Post (online)*, 16 Aug; *D.Mail (online)*, 17 Aug 2016.



SAUL VAZQUEZ / FACEBOOK

SWNS.COM

# Two prodigious births

Unusual animal arrivals meet with contrasting responses



• A male piglet resembling a monkey was born in Thailand. Named *Jao Bun Lai* (one of much merit) he was one of a normal litter born to a pig called Mali in the small village of Noan Phiban in the north-east of the country. Owner Wilaiporn Kampanawan, 60, said that the unusual animal had something that looked like a small trunk or proboscis. His eyes were stuck together and he had no nostrils, but otherwise behaved like an average piglet. He had to breathe through his mouth and at the time of the report was being fed with a syringe as he declined his mother's milk. Villagers were coming from far and wide to take a look. *Jao Bun Lai*'s owner planned to take him as an offering to the temple to make merit and was sure that he would bring nothing but good fortune. *thaivisa.com*, 7 June 2016.

• In April, a bizarre goat was born in southern Malaysia. Its face had a distinctly human appearance because of the small nose, missing ears, and seemingly angelic smile. It also had short limbs and an underdeveloped torso with a light brown coat of hair. A farmhand broke news of the birth to Ibrahim Basir, 63, but by the time he made it to the goat pen on his farm in the village of Felda, the newborn was dead. The mother had attacked it soon after birth and trampled it to death. Basir



TOP: Prodigious piglet *Jao Bun Lai* was being fed with a syringe and attracting visitors from far and wide. ABOVE: This newborn goat was seen as an omen of bad tidings.

claims the kid had no umbilical cord. Local residents feared the monstrous goat was an omen of bad tidings, although several people tried to buy the carcass.

Basir, however, packed the body in an icebox and took it to the district veterinary office for a necropsy. *weirdasianews.com*, 27 April 2016.

## SIDELINES...

### CANNY CAT

A cat turned up a veterinary clinic, scratched to be let in and promptly gave birth to four kittens. Vets said the tortoiseshell stray seemed to know the Best clinic in Novosibirsk, Siberia, was the ideal place. *Metro*, 17 Aug 2016.

### SWAN SEEKS HELP

For years, a wild swan and its mate lived on a small lake on a farm in Thrusk, North Yorkshire. One morning the farmer's wife heard a loud knocking on the back door. It was one of the swans, which lifted its leg to show an embedded barbed fisherman's hook. Vet Julian Norton was summoned and removed the hook while the swan remained quite calm. Returned to the lake, it entwined necks with its partner, creating a heart shape. *Kent on Sunday*, 19 June 2016.

### HUE AND CRY

A mother instigated a huge hunt in Bingley, West Yorkshire, after reporting that her daughter had been snatched from her car – only to remember she had dropped her off at nursery. *Metro*, 8 July 2016.

### STANSTED POLT?

Police at Stansted Airport say they keep hearing loud bangs when their station is empty. In tweets from the official Stansted Police Twitter feed, one worker said he was convinced the place was haunted. *Sunday Star*, 28 Aug 2016.

### SNAKEHEAD SNACK

Jennifer Lampe, 28, of Market Drayton in Shropshire, drunkenly decapitated her two snakes with scissors and swallowed their heads. On 8 April, police found her with a still-moving 6ft (1.8m) boa constrictor round her neck and both of the heads in her pockets after vomiting them up. She was given a four-month suspended jail term and banned from keeping animals for five years. *Sun*, 19 Aug 2016.



## SIDELINES...

### MARSUPIAL RESCUE

In early August, a wallaby was seen wading into the sea at Ramsey on the Isle of Man. It was rescued by police who rushed it to a vet as it had a broken leg. The island's growing wallaby population is descended from two that escaped from a wildlife park in 1970. *Sun, 7 Aug 2016.*

### EXTRA-WILD BOAR

Divers saved the bacon of a wild boar found struggling a mile out to sea. They hauled the 70kg (154lb) animal into a boat off the coast of Orio in the Gulpuzcoa area of northern Spain. No one knew how the mountain dweller got so far out to sea. It had a rest before being released into the wild. *Metro, 16 Aug 2016.*

### A REAL MONSTER

A fisherman who found a 75lb (34kg) pearl in a giant clam off Palawan Island, Philippines, kept it for 10 years under his bed as a good luck charm, not realising it was the biggest natural pearl ever found, worth around £76 million. It is 12in (30cm) wide and 26in (66cm) long and, if confirmed, will easily beat the current record holder, the Pearl of Lao Tzu, which weighs 14lb (6.4kg). *Sun, 23 Aug; BBC News, 24 Aug 2016.*

### UNLUCKY AUSTRALIAN

A 21-year-old Australian was bitten on the penis by a potentially deadly spider for the second time in five months. The tradesman was bitten by a redback spider in a portable lavatory. It was his first visit to a portable loo since his last encounter with a redback and the bite occurred on "pretty much the same spot". *D. Telegraph, 29 Sept 2016.*



# Mass avian plummets

**Grackles, geese and seabirds felled by mystery illnesses**



ABOVE: One of the grackles rescued by a local wildlife centre.

A total of 47 grackles (a type of songbird that travels in flocks) rained down on the Dorchester neighbourhood of Boston, Massachusetts, on 8 September. The Animal Rescue League of Boston said that 32 had died, either at the scene or afterwards as rescuers attempted to tend to them. The remaining birds were said to be in "good condition" and were due to be sent to a wildlife centre in Grafton, Massachusetts. "Emergency treatment" was also given to a cat at the scene, but it died. Another cat also reportedly died; homeowners were advised to keep their cats and dogs indoors and check what they were eating. Dead grackles were sent to various labs for testing. At the time of the report, it was unclear whether they had perished due to a virus, some sort of environmental pollution or intentional poisoning. *Boston Herald, Guardian, 10 Sept 2016.*

- Over the weekend of 14-15 March 2015, at least 2,000 snow geese fell dead from the sky in Idaho while migrating from the southwestern United States and Mexico to nesting grounds on the northern coast of Alaska. Mud Lake, northwest of Idaho Falls, and Market Lake are popular resting stops for migrating waterfowl and that's where most

can survive in soil and water for up to four months. This, they say, can kill birds in flight. Those that attempt to land may fly upside down, try to land while still in the air and swim in circles. It's interesting that the "avian cholera" reason is, in this case as well as many others, usually prefaced with "suspected" and often followed by "wildlife officials are puzzled", as was the case in geese falling from the sky in Oregon in 2005 and in Toledo, Ohio, in 2011. [R] 16 Mar; [mysteriousuniverse.org](http://mysteriousuniverse.org), 18 Mar 2015.

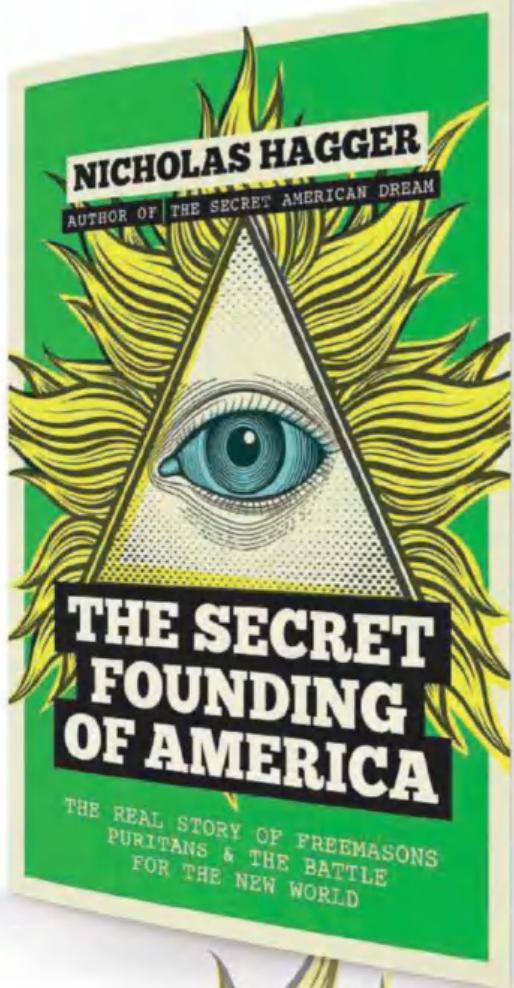
## At least 2,000 snow geese fell dead from the sky in Idaho

of the carcasses were found. Others were also seen at the Camas National Wildlife Refuge near Dubois. The geese were picked up and incinerated by wildlife officials after a few were sent to the Idaho Fish and Game Wildlife Lab for testing. The officials were quick, as always, to suspect highly contagious avian cholera, caused by bacteria that

- On 10 May 2015, some 1,300 seabirds were found dead by the sea in the southern Chilean town of Lenga. They were on a small black-sand beach, a cove with several hundred inhabitants who live mainly on fishing and tourism. The birds, which belong to the Procellariidae family, might have drowned after getting trapped in fishing nets, or died from a disease such as bird flu, which is not endemic to Chile, said the country's Agriculture and Livestock Service, which was analysing samples taken from the birds to try to determine the cause of death. Hundreds of birds were found dead in the same area in 2010. In that case, the authorities determined they had been caught in fishing nets. [AFP] 19 May 2015.

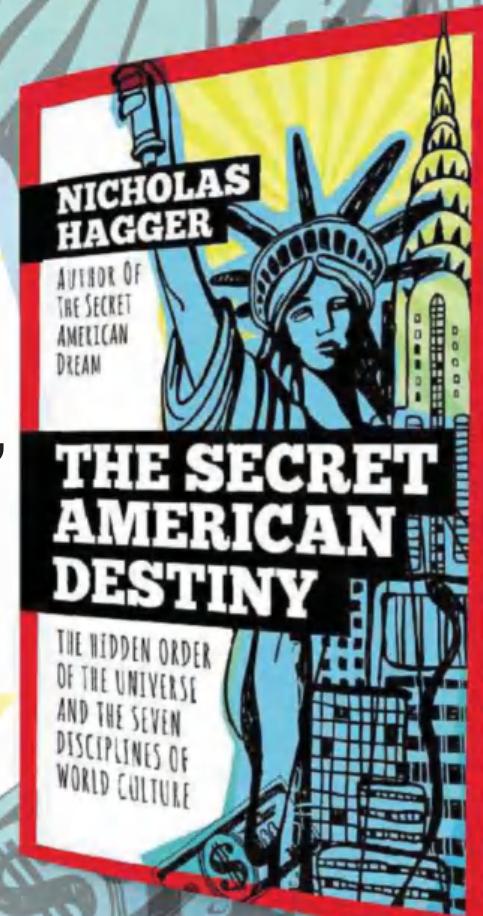


ABOVE: Some of the thousands of snow geese that fell dead from the sky in Idaho.



**UNCOVER THE  
REAL STORY OF  
THE FOUNDING  
OF AMERICA...**

**...AND IN AN  
UNCERTAIN  
TIME, DISCOVER  
AMERICA'S  
DESTINY AND  
HOW IT WILL  
AFFECT US ALL.**





# ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind – The Journal of Archæology, Consciousness and Culture* ([www.tandfonline.com/rtam](http://www.tandfonline.com/rtam))

## SPEAK TO ME

Remember Ötzi the “Ice Man”, the remarkably well-preserved 5,000-year-old frozen mummy discovered high in the Alps 25 years ago [**FT60:14, 75:60, 192:27, 198:24, 207:26**]?

Well, forensic study of the poor murdered fellow has been going on since then, and much has been found out about him and his Bronze Age world. One of the more bizarre studies is an attempt to reproduce the sound of Ötzi’s voice. This involved using CT scans to map the mummy’s internal structure. As Ötzi’s arm is covering his throat, partly obscuring and dislocating the hyoid (tongue-bone), the tension and density of the vocal cords and the thickness and composition of the throat tissue had to be simulated using mathematical models.

The research team, from Bolzano’s General Hospital in Italy, reckons that the Ice Man’s voice had a frequency between 100 and 150 Hz, which is similar to average males today. So far, using only vowel sounds, this digitally reconstructed “best possible approximation” indicates that he had a rough, deep voice, described variously as “gravelly” and “like that of a chain smoker”. Further work on Ötzi’s vocal architecture continues, and there has been a suggestion that what is learned may possibly be used to ‘voice’ other mummies around the world. It’s all ever so slightly creepy. *Science Alert, Discover Magazine*, both 22 Sept 2016.

## NOW HEAR THIS

The Neanderthals were a human strain that preceded modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) in Europe and Asia. The two in fact overlapped, certainly in Europe at least, and there is even evidence of some interbreeding (tests show a small trace of Neanderthal DNA in many of us today). There is much speculation as to how and why the Neanderthals mysteriously died out, whether it was due to the actions or effects of the incoming modern



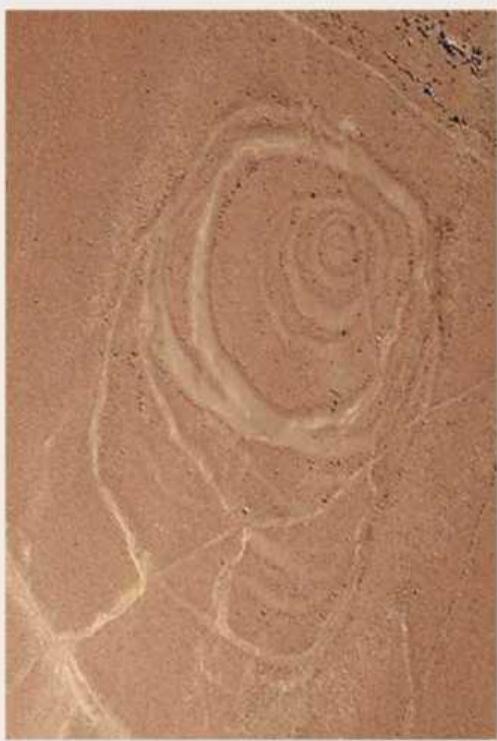
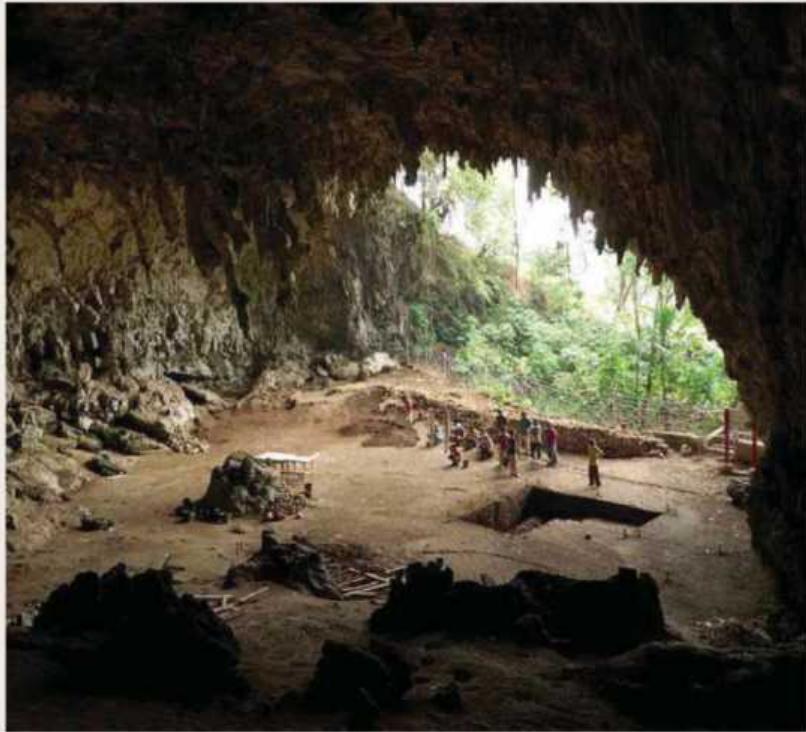
TOP: A reconstruction of what Ötzi might have looked like; we may now know what he sounded like too. ABOVE: A reconstruction of *Homo floresiensis*.

humans, or other causes. For many years it was thought that the heavier-boned Neanderthals were too primitive to have qualities we might ascribe solely to modern humans, but gradually this attitude is being modified by various discoveries, one of the more recently reported being concerned with Neanderthal speech. It was assumed that Neanderthals could only grunt, making crude sounds, and so be incapable of having actual language, but this is now put in question by research conducted by a team of researchers variously from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Jena University Hospital and University College London.

The researchers studied unearthed ear bones from 14 Neanderthals using micro-CT scans on the ossicle (middle ear) to create 3-D digital models. In studying the models, the researchers found that while there are definite differences between Neanderthal and modern human inner ear architecture, they both nevertheless function in essentially similar ways. Putting these findings in the context of earlier genetic research which revealed a gene (FOXP2 if you want to know) in Neanderthals associated with vocal communications and speech, the indications are that Neanderthals were probably able to communicate with one another in ways that were far more sophisticated than had previously been supposed. *Phys.Org News*, 27 Sept 2016. (Original paper in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences [PNAS]).

## HUMANS VS. HOBBITS

Never mind the relationship of *H. Sapiens* with Neanderthals, what about our ancestors’ relationship with the hobbits? More specifically, with the diminutive (one metre tall), now extinct strain of humans known as *Homo floresiensis* on the Indonesian island of Flores, about which we have written in previous columns



ABOVE LEFT: Liang Bua cave on Flores. ABOVE RIGHT: One of the mysterious geoglyphs near Quilcapampa, Peru. BELOW: The largest of the Kazakh geoglyphs.

**[FT236:20, 246:18, 252:18].** It was originally thought that these creatures were just anomalous, pygmy-like modern humans, but further research showed that they were a genuinely separate human species that became extinct around 11,000 years ago. But now, re-dating work on *H. floresiensis* remains in the Liang Bua cave on Flores has pushed the extinction date back to around 50,000 years ago. This complicates matters, because a team from the University of Wollongong, Australia, has found human teeth in the same cave dating to c.46,000 years ago (using nearby charcoal). As the team leader comments: "It's a smoking gun for modern human interaction, but we haven't yet found the bullet." The team will recommence work in the cave in 2017 to see if there are remains of modern humans who saw the last of the hobbits. The circumstantial evidence begins to hint that the advent of modern humanity was bad news for our various older human cousins. *Nature*, 21 Sept 2016.



## THE MEANING OF THE GEOGLYPHS REMAINS A MYSTERY

### WRITTEN ON THE LAND

Many ancient peoples used the land itself as a kind of sketchpad producing enigmatic ground drawings we call 'geoglyphs'. The latest to be reported are in Peru (already home to the famous 'Nazca Lines'). Using a mix of ground survey, satellite imagery and drones, a team funded by the National Geographic Society's Committee for Research and Exploration has mapped dozens of previously unrecorded

geoglyphs near the ancient settlement of Quilcapampa, in the Sihuas Valley, southern Peru. The features occur in various configurations – rings, concentric circles, and 'swirls'. They vary in size: single ring markings range between 2-4m (6.5-13ft) in diameter while multi-ring geoglyphs can extend over 800m<sup>2</sup> (957yds<sup>2</sup>). Some patterns were marked out by rock piles, but most were etched into the ground by removing the darker, oxidised surface pebbles to expose the lighter, sandy soil below. The geoglyphs are thought to date to what is called the Late Intermediate Period (AD 1050-1400). Their meaning remains a mystery. *Live Science*, 23 Sept 2016.

This discovery follows on some years after an even more remarkable finding in Kazakhstan. Here, 260 huge ground patterns formed mainly by gigantic mounds stretch across the steppes – geometric figures of squares, crosses, lines and rings the size of several football fields, fully recognizable only from the air [FT335:16]. The

largest is a square with sides of 900ft (275m) containing an X-shaped diagonal cross, the whole thing marked out by over 100 raised mounds. Another is a three-armed swastika (an ancient symbol of good fortune, besmirched by the Nazis) some 300ft (91m) across. The mounds are earthen, about 3ft (90cm) tall (though originally taller) and almost 40ft (12m) across. Some of the ground designs, though, are formed by trenches and ridges.

These startling and utterly mysterious geoglyphs were first discovered accidentally by an amateur archaeologist looking at Google Earth images in 2007, and further satellite photography by NASA in 2015 has confirmed their extent. Because of the proximity of some Neolithic settlements, various observers have suggested they may date back 8,000 years, but scientific dating of two of the mounds, using a technique known as optically stimulated luminescence, indicates a construction date c.800 BC. *New York Times*, 30 Oct 2015.

# CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 205. A FLOURISH OF STRUMPETS

Q: What did the leper say to the prostitute?

A: Keep the tip.

The Madonna-Whore complex came early. Temple prostitution was widespread from Babylon (Herodotus, bk1 ch199) to Corinth, whose girls were forbidden by Plato (*Republic*, para404d) to athletes-in-training; hence the proverb, "Not every man is lucky enough to go to Corinth."

The Old Testament (Joshua 2: 1-7) boasts the original tart with the heart of gold, Rahab who sheltered the Israelite spies (very 007-ish), her red cord signal prefiguring our Red Light Districts. No such kudos for Jezebel (Kings 1 & 2), tossed from a tower and eaten by dogs, though modernly celebrated in song by Frankie Laine and fiction by Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*). Rahab is listed by Matthew (ch1 para5) as one ancestor of Christ; cf David Cameron's connection via mistress and bastard daughter to King William IV.

Similar lineage in Rome where (Livy, bk1 ch4 para7) says Romulus and Remus may actually have been suckled by local tart Accia Larentia, Lupa/She-Wolf being one of at least 50 slang words for whore (inventory by JN Adams, *Rheinisches Museum* 120, 1983. 321-58, online).

Other biblical sporting ladies include Potiphar's wife (OT) and Mary Magdalene (NT), plus the figurative Great Whore of Babylon ("One measures a circle beginning anywhere" – Fort, Books, p544).

Then, as now, distinctions between amateur and professional blur. Despite their French nickname and concentration of books and movies (*Belle du Jour*) thereon, Les grandes horizontales universalise – think Pamela Harriman, Barbara Skelton, or back to Kitty Fisher, reported by Casanova (no less) as eating a thousand pound note in a sandwich – now, that's class.

Astyana, Helen's slave-girl, (*Suda* A4260) invented and published "all the sexual positions". Her name implies inability to arouse erections – as GBS remarked, Those Who Can't, Teach. Did Helen use these techniques to keep Paris yearning? Other didactic doxies included writer-artists Elephantis (a favourite of emperor Tiberius) and Philænis, condemned by the early Church Fathers – why were they taking a peek?).

Despite Dorothy Parker's "You Can Take a Whore to Culture But You Cannot Make Her Think," high-class

Greek courtesans (*Hetairæ* = Companions) were cherished for their conversation and wit (shades of the man who only bought *Playboy* for the interviews) – no dumb-belles, they. Pericles's blue-stockinged mistress Aspasia (a quondam brothel-madame) was a prize example. Athenæus (making up for our loss of many Prostitutes' Biographies, including Suetonius's) devoted Book Thirteen of his *Learned Men at Dinner* to whorish anecdotes, e.g. both Gnathena and Phryne credited with saying to a client who offered them an absurdly small tot of a vintage wine, It's Very Small For Its Age.

Athenæus also gives us Clepsydra = Miss Waterclock, nicknamed for thus timing her clients' efforts. I think of Jane Fonda wristwatch-checking in *Klute*: indeed, when in her pomp as Barbarella and Cat Ballou, I often thought of her.

Don't tut-tut me, feminists. Socrates (Xenophon, *Memories of Socrates*, bk3 ch11) once rushed out of his lecture room to ogle the famous breasts of classy call-girl Theodote –

I never did that.

Best though to avoid his Nannion, notorious for strangling customers – John Profumo got off lightly, being only Keeler-hauled. Also not recommended are Rome's low-class *Bustuariae* (Martial, bk3, no93 v15) who plied for hire in graveyards – dead romantic but surely not ideal for chariot kerb-crawlers.

Still, you never know. Athenian streetwalkers wore sandals that spelled out 'Follow Me' – might end up anywhere, these anticipating the Fuck-Me shoes of Germaine Greer and Amy Winehouse.

Probably safer and cheaper to stick to the state brothels (male and female) whose prices were 'democratically' equalised by Solon.

The modern cliché that many prostitutes are lesbians was anticipated by Plato (*Symposium*, ch191e paras2-5) and Lucian (*Dialogues of the Courtesans* 5), giving a rare ancient description, albeit more restrained than Martial's (bk7 no67) lurid version of Sapphic rumpy-pumpy, tribad Philænis's colossal clitoris and energy enabling her to pedicate eleven girls a day.

Q: Why do lesbians go in for unaccompanied plain song?

A: Because they like to play Hims without organs (Anthony Powell)

Pompeian ads (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol4), e.g. "Doris Will Give You A Good Time For Two Asses," "Attice Charges Four Sesterces," "Greek Love A Speciality," prefigure those traditionally found in London newsagents' windows and telephone kiosks.

There were whorish queens and queenly whores. Cleopatra allegedly fellated 100 men in a night – outscoring Linda Lovelace. Messalina earned her modern 'Complex' by defeating Rome's top pro in a shaggathon, 25 men in 24 hours (Pliny, *Natural History*, bk10 ch83 para179), an event luridly rehashed by Juvenal (*Satire* 6 vv108-32), dubbing her *nondum satiata* (still not satisfied), a comment also applied by Procopius (*Secret History*, ch9) to bear-keeper's daughter-turned-empress Theodora who at dinner parties would shag out 10 "exceptionally virile youths" before taking on their 30 attendants; cf. my 'Sexual Rhetoric in Procopius,' *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987), 150-2, online.

"They say Catherine the Great had 300 lovers; I just did the best I could in a couple of hours" – Mae West.

All outdone by Annabelle Cheung who (*Spectator*, 22 May, 1999) took on 251 men in 10 hours for "a sociological study of sexuality."

"The concoction that has caged us is one of the most brilliant harlots in modern prostitution" – Fort, Books, pp352-3.



# MEGALITHOMANIA

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# It's enough to make you scream?

We asked Tate Modern to switch to a Fairtrade tourist bar and they said it does not 'fit our current plans'

Most tourist attractions sell souvenir chocolate bars. You know the sort of thing, they usually have a picture of the attraction on the wrapper?

What you may not have noticed is that they are usually made from non Fairtrade chocolate.

It's as if the ethical consumer revolution never happened. Venues could easily switch to Fairtrade but they make excuses. So now we need your help.

Join the Fair Tourism Bar Campaign and help change the tourist industry. It can be done. In the 1980s we all put pressure on supermarkets to stock Fairtrade products or switch their own brands to Fairtrade.

[www.FairTouristBars.uk](http://www.FairTouristBars.uk)



Pictured above - bars from attractions who have switched

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Sign our Change.org petition, nominate an attraction at [www.FairTouristBars.uk](http://www.FairTouristBars.uk), write, message or Facebook your favourite attraction asking them to make the switch to a fair tourist bar.



# HOSTWATCH

**ALAN MURDIE** examines cases in which attacks by ghosts have left alleged physical traces.

The theme of ghosts making their presence known by applying physical force to the bodies of the living is one that I've visited here before. I do so again as lately claims involving spirits inflicting visible marks on human flesh are on the rise again. A dramatic example was reported from Hull in early September under the heading "Ghost attacked me at Hull factory and left me with rope burn". Carol Fieldhouse of Pontefract suffered what appeared to be a lurid mark on her neck whilst participating in a ghost investigation at a former food-processing factory on Hessle Road, off West Dock. She stated: "To be honest, I wasn't expecting much when I went along. But almost the moment I walked in I was pulled, pushed and grabbed. In one room I walked in but stopped immediately. There was something really not nice in there. I started feeling this burning sensation and then the others noticed the mark on my neck."

Save for a portion of the building occupied by a fish and chip business, most of the site is empty, and rather in keeping with its local 'Old Ropery', the strange mark on Ms Fieldhouse's neck was immediately compared with a rope burn. One witness, Steve Kneeshaw, stated: "I saw Carol go into one room and then she just went red hot. The next thing we saw a rope mark on her neck... A short time later it just vanished but we managed to get a photo". (Both the photograph of the mark and its thermal image were reproduced in the *Hull Daily Mail* on 7 September 2016). "I have never seen someone physically harmed by an entity before," Mr Kneeshaw added. "It really shocked me."

Something physical appears to have occurred, but what? Arguably, any attribution of this skin mark to the work of a spirit rope is premature, indeed rather rash in the circumstances (no pun intended). That certain members of the investigation team might be unduly credulous or prone to wild exaggeration is suggested by a statement in the press attributed to Ms Fieldhouse: "We also set up a line of balls on the floor, which moved by themselves while the team had a machine which could detect demons and poltergeists". I would just love to know the patent details of this alleged machine. Just what are its origins and history, when was it tested and, above all, how does it work?

The unexplained movement of objects may be credible – after all it is often reported on ghost vigils (whatever the cause may be) – but the claim of being in possession of a poltergeist and demon-detecting device is spurious nonsense. If true it would mean that a whole multitude of taxing scientific, philosophical and theological issues that have troubled and perplexed mankind for millennia could now progress with the help of such an instrument. Our understanding of

JOHN MAINPRIZE



ABOVE LEFT: The Hull factory where Carol Fieldhouse claims she was "attacked" by a ghost. ABOVE RIGHT: The alleged injuries received by a trainee police officer in Argentina after being assaulted by "a black shadow".

## "THE MOMENT I WALKED IN, I WAS PUSHED, PULLED AND GRABBED"

the cosmos, consciousness and existence itself would be immeasurably transformed. Potentially everything from physics to hospice care would be revolutionised if there were any validity in a gadget that could genuinely and reliably detect discarnate entities. The owners of the patent could justly expect to become as rich, if not richer, than Bill Gates.

Yet we find the people supposedly possessing this intellectual wonder, surely a contender for the greatest invention in human history, eschewing the fortune that would rightly be theirs and instead running around a dismal and disused factory in Hull at weekends. Even given the long history of neglected geniuses and maverick inventors, it just doesn't add up. Far from corroborating the claims of researchers, such nonsense simply goes to undermine their credibility.

Depressingly, it reminds me of a similar boast made in 1998 by a now-defunct London-based group to be in possession of a 'spirit detection' device. I witnessed this being deployed on a rather ill-fated public ghost hunt at one London site, being assured in the presence of the press by the excitable organiser that there were "four demons" on the premises, and warned "that they slap you about" (rather like the claims made in Hull). From my brief examination of the device

concerned, it seemed to be an electrical gadget generating loud static and white noise through an audio output fed into earphones. This might charitably explain why its operators proved deaf to all requests for information as to who invented it or how it worked. That the device ultimately proved worthless is rather suggested by the fact that, instead of receiving a Nobel Prize, some members of the group concerned went on to a further career as male strippers.

But what of the mark on Ms Fieldhouse's neck? Judging by the press report, it seems she has a strong emotional commitment to the idea of spirits and claims being spectre-stricken since childhood. However, this has not deterred her in adulthood from residing next door to the infamous poltergeist-ridden home of 30 East Drive in Pontefract ('The Black Monk of Pontefract' case, 1966-68; see **FT293:28-37**). Perhaps inevitably, her own home is also subject to paranormal activity and she has since become something of a 'spirit expert'. Ms Fieldhouse has not even been put off by the strange rope burn on her neck, with the paper relating: "Despite the horrific experience, Ms Fieldhouse is clamouring to come back."

Alleged injuries and bodily marks blamed upon ghosts are certainly an international phenomenon. For example, last year in Argentina, 25-year-old trainee police officer Maria Fernanda described how she was left with scratch marks on her neck, arm and chest after an assault by what she described as *una sombra negra* – "a black shadow". She had been on guard duty at the Police Academy in Buenos Aires and was alerted by a noise in a room. The commanding officer told her to ignore it and went back

to his office; but Maria, convinced there was something present in the room, drew her pistol and entered. Inside she saw a black shadow "flying across the room towards me. Before I could react it grabbed me and I screamed and ran full pelt to the bathroom where I locked myself in. I then noticed there was blood on my face, arms and chest and realised it had scratched me."

Photographs of her injuries were released to the press, which also reported that there had been other sightings of the black shadow; the police station was reputedly haunted by a blood-soaked woman and girl. (Sources: <https://noticias.terra.com>, 22 Mar; *D.Mirror*, 25 Mar 2015, etc.)

However, where the emotions are engaged and strong pre-existing beliefs are involved, it is a trite point that cuts, bruises and abrasions can be inflicted by accident or design, and simply not noticed amid the excitement of the occasion. Some individuals may have particularly sensitive skins and strange markings can arise from the power of suggestion alone. (See *Religion, Psychology and Healing*, 1955, by Leslie D Weatherhead). The fact that Ms Fieldhouse's mark faded so quickly might point to a psychosomatic origin.

Even when the police are called in over such claims, it can only be stressed that great caution must be exercised. Mention of a violent 'Black Shadow' in Argentina reminded me of a case in 2013 near London on which I was consulted. A woman in her late fifties reported being the victim of an assault at the home of her former husband, a retired teacher. She accused him, whilst he denied her complaint and blamed a ghost – another menacing 'black shadow' (as he dubbed her – it was female), which he said loitered around the staircase in his house making a nuisance of herself. The man concerned claimed a long history of psychic experiences both at home and at former workplaces (a few of which seemed circumstantially plausible). However, any attempts to corroborate his stories were met with evasions by him, blocking any chance of obtaining information or speaking to other potential witnesses. In the end, the police decided not to press any charges, but this didn't mean that they accepted the story of the 'Black Shadow' – and nor did I. When faced with any claims of physical harm or injury attributed to a phantom, the prudent ghost hunter would always postpone further enquiry and advise the witness to obtain a professional medical opinion.

Of course, the question of how the mind affects the body is a vast and hugely controversial area where clinical opinions diverge enormously. In life, we all have experience of how emotional states can affect us physically, even if the processes and neural pathways between the brain, mind and body are by no means understood. Being anxious, angry, excited or afraid can all result in measurable physiological reactions. When such reactions arise within a socially charged and excitable environment – such as a religious revival or séance circle – these



ABOVE: Romanian 'poltergeist girl' Eleonore Zugun displaying abrasions on her face.

effects may be attributed to the presence of a divine being or entity rather than the body of the witness. In short, if you sincerely believe in weird things, weird things can happen as your body reacts as a result, though the mechanisms are not understood. Indeed, the earliest proposal that such phenomena as the bleeding marks of religious stigmata are caused by mental concentration dates back to at least the 16th century, from the Italian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi (1462-1525).

Stigmatics certainly provide interesting comparisons. The possibility of bearing the wounds of Christ was first raised by St Paul in his *Epistle to the Galatians* (6:17), but it was some 1,200 years before stigmata made an appearance amongst Christian mystics and saints. Contrary to what Wikipedia and other sources declare, St Francis of Assisi was not the first stigmatic (see 'Stigmata before St Francis' by Herbert Thurston in *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, 1951). The earliest English case was in 1222, recorded by the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew of Paris, of a man in Oxford bearing what were presented as miraculous wounds. If this was the same case also mentioned in the *Chronicle* of Ralph of Coggeshall, it may have been fraudulent. However, confessions of fraud before the ecclesiastical courts and Inquisition in this period must be treated with caution: a confession of hoaxing would attract a more lenient sentence than insisting that a suspect phenomenon was supernatural in origin, for the latter risked being perceived as a diabolical rather than divine manifestation, attracting greater punishment.

Another early stigmatic was the Blessed Dodo, an elderly Dutch monk who was found to bear wounds matching those of Christ at the crucifixion after he was killed by a collapsing wall of his cell in 1229 (or 1231). The Blessed Dodo became one of the earliest

of a long line of stigmatics scrutinised by the Church over the centuries, and who continue to appear periodically.

Instances of such phenomena outside a Catholic context arose in the 19th century against the backdrop of mesmerism, spiritualism and the lives of hysterical patients. Strange cases of abrasions, blisters and wounds were mentioned by Frederic Myers in his classic *Human Personality* vol.1, relating: "Hæmorrhage and bleeding stigmata were several times produced in the famous subject, Louis Vive... by verbal suggestion alone." In another case, hypnotic suggestions led to a cruciform stigma on a woman's chest, accompanied on one occasion by blood, always on a Friday. Myers also cited a case from the *Revue de l'Hypnotisme* for February 1892, where as a result of hypnotic suggestions a patient bled through the skin, which remained intact with "the blood appearing to ooze through it like perspiration." This points to the existence of a power, beyond waking consciousness, that can mould the material body, but rooted in the body rather than the spirit world.

The Romanian poltergeist girl Eleonore Zugun (1913-1998) was one of the most closely monitored and tested poltergeist subjects of the 20th century, exhibited across Europe to interested scientists. She displayed bite marks and abrasions on her skin attributed to an entity dubbed 'Dracu' (the Romanian for Devil). Although Eleonore was accused of faking her injuries, the critics could prove nothing. Close observation in the period 1925-27 rebutted suggestions that the marks were a product of self-harm or abuse. Virtually all observers over the period were satisfied that the majority of marks could not be deliberately inflicted injuries, suggesting at the very least a psychosomatic origin. Reviewing the evidence, Austrian parapsychologist Peter Mulacz states: "Numerous individuals in different places were able to witness the phenomena" ('The Poltergeist Phenomena of Eleonore Zugun' (1926) by Harry Price, *Journal of the American SPR*, p459). 'Eleonore Zugun the re-evaluation of a historic RSPK case' (1999) by Peter Mulacz in *Journal of Parapsychology* 63, 15-45; Peter Mulacz, pers. comm., 16 July 2015).

Parallel cases have emerged since; for example, in Colombia at Easter 1999 where mysterious scratch marks, cuts and writing appeared on the skin of a 16-year-old girl identified only as 'Eva', witnessed by journalists from the leading national daily newspaper *El Tiempo* (15 April 1999).

This last example is a reminder how worldwide there is an enormous volume of parallel historic and contemporary accounts of extraordinary bodily phenomena occurring in non-Western cultures, detailed in the literature of yoga, shamanism and non-Christian mysticism (see 'On Regurgitation, Mediumship and Yoga' by CTK Charif, *Proceedings of the SPR*, 1973, vol.47 No.757).

Thus, whatever happened to Carol Fieldhouse in Hull, she is far from alone.

## AFRICAN WONDERS

### WITCHES CRASH-LAND

On 4 July, an alleged witch fell from the sky at Akyeremadi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Masons at a block factory (possibly making concrete blocks) claimed they heard a loud crash at 3:30am. When they got to the scene, they found a woman on the ground wearing a shiny dress, with blood on her face. She ran away, but the masons – along with “a colossal number of curious people” – chased her to a nearby house. Now topless, the woman identified herself by two names – Gifty and Afia – and said she was flying to Kwanwoma when she was hit by an electrical shock, causing her to crash. One cause given for the “electrical shock” was prayers from people calling in to a local radio station, who had somehow heard about the imminent flight.

The people in the mob said they’d never seen the woman before and gave no indication how anyone knew she’d be flying over – unless perhaps they’d heard about the other falling witch earlier that night in the nearby Tema community. Doris Awuku said she heard a loud bang at 2am and started praying, beseeching God to strike dead any evil spirit in the house. Moments later, her brother called out that someone was lying in front of her door. “I quickly came out and saw an old lady lying naked in front of my door, but when she saw me, she ran and locked herself in our bathroom,” she said. Madam Awuku grabbed some anointing oil, broke down the door and poured it on the woman, who confessed that she had been flying over as a bird but turned into a human when she crashed. Before the homeowner could get any more details (for her insurance claim), the naked woman escaped and ran into a nearby cemetery where a massive crowd chasing her threatened to beat her. We guess she got away. [nigeriana.org](http://nigeriana.org), 5 Aug; [mysteriousuniverse.com](http://mysteriousuniverse.com), 6 Aug

**Witches and wizards fall from the skies, Holy Ghost knocks up prophet's wife, and a goblin dons stolen women's knickers...**



2016. For earlier crash-landing wizards in Ghana, see FT96:13, 319:5.

- In mid-September, workers at City Gate Church in Benin opened the church gate to find a naked young man in the compound. They were stunned because the church gate, which was locked the previous day, is very high and fortified with razor wire. There was no logical way to explain how the man had got in. When he was interrogated, he said he was a wizard from the Delta state on an unknown assignment when his ‘spiritual google map’ stopped working. He found his course diverted, and when he got to Ring Road, Benin, he hovered around the area before crash-landing in the church premises. [naij.com](http://naij.com), 20 Sept 2016.

### SECOND JESUS

Shepherd Bushiri, a self-styled prophet from Malawi based in South Africa, announced that his wife Mary Bushiri (herself a prophetess) had been impregnated by the Holy Ghost and was going to give birth to the second Jesus, who would be called Major Jesus. “God spoke to me that my wife shall deliver the second Jesus,” he said. “So I stayed away from her and counted on God to send the Holy Spirit to put the baby in her womb. My God is the only God of miracles and it has been done.

### She had lost the panties in mysterious circumstances



For those who are doubting, wait for the birth of Major Jesus, you will believe this when doctors carry DNA test and see that Major Jesus the second will have the same genes as those of Jesus Christ.” No further news has been received at Fortean Towers. *Malawi Independent*, 13 July; [naijapicks.com](http://naijapicks.com), 30 July 2016.

### KNICKER-SNATCHING GOBLIN

Finally, a vintage report from Zimbabwe. At a cleansing ceremony in the village of Charisekera, Gokwe district, on 25 July 2012, Lameck Ncube, 62, confessed to owning a goblin that had been terrorising women. The ceremony – attended by hundreds of villagers and journalists from different media

LEFT: The naked wizard who suffered a malfunction of his “spiritual google map”. BELOW: Shepherd and Mary Bushiri, waiting for the birth of Jesus.

organisations – was conducted by a *n’anga* (herbalist or traditional healer) from Matabeleland. He had been invited by Chief Njelele, along with a prophet from an apostolic sect, to bring ‘peace’ to his area after 26 women and schoolgirls had woken up recently to find themselves without knickers.

Ncube’s goblin was to blame. The *n’anga* and six aides accompanied Ncube to his home to capture the goblin, which shared a bedroom with one of Ncube’s sons. Villagers jostled to have a glimpse of the notorious creature. According to the *Zimbabwe Herald*: “The goblin, which looked like a living creature, was wearing a pair of blue female panties, which village head Charisekera’s wife, Ms Silvia Marumbe, claimed to be hers... She lost the panties in mysterious circumstances in 2004. The goblin was later burnt before the crowd.”

Ncube said the goblin had been giving him sleepless nights for a long time, but he was now a free man. He had bought it in Chakeri near Kadoma in 1983 when he was still working in Kwekwe. He hoped it would bring him luck, promotion and prosperity, but in this he was sorely disappointed. He consulted *n’angas* to try and get shot of the useless critter, but they told him it was now ‘weird’ and was going around homesteads looking for women to ‘make love’ to. “I didn’t know that it had been taking away villagers’ panties until today,” he said. “I only knew that we were no longer on good terms.” Women from neighbouring villages positively identified their knickers, which had been found under a bush two weeks earlier. One might ask why the latest *n’anga* was able to cull the goblin when an earlier attempt had failed; perhaps an extra zap from the apostolic prophet was needed. *Zimbabwe Herald*, 19+25+27 July 2012.

# A<sup>z</sup> ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

## TWIG MAN ENTITY - OR ENT?

One of my favourite races of being in JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy are those animate trees known as ents, but I always assumed that they were fictitious – but thanks to some information I received recently, I'm no longer quite so sure! On 16 August 2016, Portuguese correspondent Tiago Cardoso kindly brought to my attention a short item from Vanessa Fidalgo's book *Seres Mágicos em Portugal [Magic Beings in Portugal]*, published in 2014, which I have not seen mentioned in any English-language publication. The item concerns a mystifying being known locally as the *homen-galho* or twig man:

"I will tell a story that was told to me by my grandfather, about a creature that lives in the forest near the village of Pessequeiro in northern Portugal.

"According to my grandfather, when he was a young man, that is, about 40 years ago, during an autumn night in Pessequeiro, he and a group of friends spotted a naked creature that moved as a man (i.e. on two legs), but the head appeared to bear tree twigs. It was exceptionally tall and thin. When it noticed them, the creature was perplexed to see them, a situation which gave the impression that its eyes were human, but also allowed them to see that it had something that looked like moss on its face. My grandfather and his friends chased the creature into the forest, throwing stones at it, but when they entered the densest areas of the grove, they lost sight of it. Then they heard animal-like noises, and dragging of vegetation, which, in the exact words of my grandfather: 'stopped everything, until the animals became afraid and fled'.

"At that moment, they also fled, in panic, to the village cafe, where they related what had happened. Obviously at that time no one believed their account, but, over the years, people here have heard more accounts of sightings of this creature. It seems that the descriptions were continuing until six years ago.

"It was six years ago when it was last reported, by a group of young people... They were in the street when they heard a strange noise, sounding like the dragging of something very heavy. They went to see what was there, and that was when one of them saw a very thin, strange figure, and he exclaimed: 'Look at that man, he looks like a twig!'.

"Then, they all remarked about the man having tree-trunk-like structures on its head, and they associated this immediately with the description that they had heard from old men. Like my grandfather's group, they ran to the nearest cafe to find people and to claim that they had seen the 'twig man'.

"At first, no one understood what they were talking about, but after a more detailed explanation everyone ran to the place of their sighting, but there was no longer anything

there. Only a total silence. Since that day, no 'forest creature' or 'twig man' has been seen, but in the village the story never died and everybody knows that in the forest exists something that is not human."

When I first read this, I wondered about wild men or wodewose, as such entities have been reported in Spain right into modern times, but the repeated claims that Portugal's twig man has tree-like twigs or trunks projecting from its head are certainly very difficult to explain via this identity. Having said that, moss on its face is less problematic, so might the twigs simply be vegetation caught up in the hair on the creature's head? Yet even if this were so, its extreme thinness and height does not recall wild man reports, in which their dimensions tend to be little different from those of modern humans. Conversely, what the twig man does closely resemble is the *LOTR* ent, and – who knows? – perhaps this fictitious yet famous entity has indeed directly inspired and coloured the twig man reports. Yet it seems unlikely that such a blatantly invented creature as an animate tree would do this. So at present, the Portuguese twig man is a notable enigma – a legend come to life, or even a fictional entity made factual. If any *FT* reader knows anything about the twig man, we'd love to hear from you. Meanwhile, my thanks to Tiago for alerting me to this incongruous Iberian.

## DRAGGING UP A DRAGON

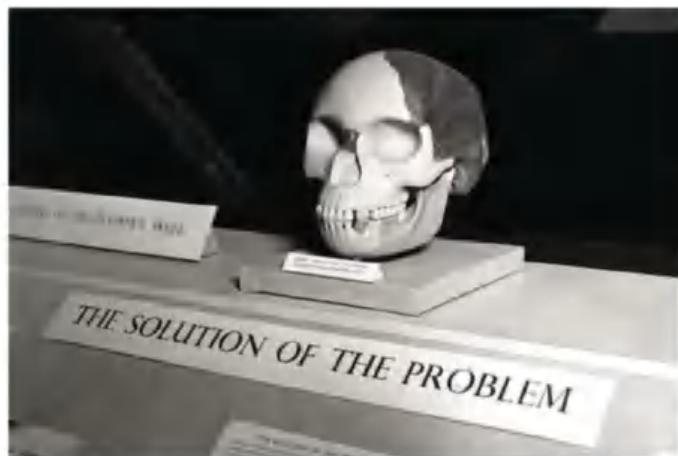
Also in August 2016, several correspondents brought to my attention a remarkable black and white video doing the rounds online that showed a team of scientists apparently finding the recently deceased and non-decomposed body of a bona fide dragon. Judging from comments posted underneath the video, quite a few people seriously believed that this beast was real. I soon discovered that the video was actually a deliberately created faux film clip from a Spanish TV documentary on dragons entitled *Cuarto Milenio (Fourth Millennium)*, fronted by zoologist Fernando Gonzalez. Moreover, the dragon itself was a very skillfully produced model, over 13ft (4m) long. Made specifically for the documentary by acclaimed Spanish artist-sculptor Juan Villa Herrera and a team of assistants at his workshop, it was constructed from latex and flexible foam, except for its wings, teeth, and claws. Unfortunately, some unidentified person had taken a copy of the film clip and distributed it online as proof that dragons do exist, thereby creating appreciable confusion – and even engendering a variant claim that the dragon in question had been found in Tibet! The clip can be seen at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRPtbcFaTg4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRPtbcFaTg4). A video revealing how the dragon was constructed can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bwR8IZ07KM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bwR8IZ07KM).



ABOVE: A still from the dragon documentary that many took to be footage of scientists examining a real, if decomposing, dragon; and a photo showing Juan Villa Herrera and his team at work creating the latex beast.



## FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS



ABOVE: A reconstruction of the 'Piltdown skull' on display in the Natural History Museum, London, in 1953. BELOW: Charles Dawson, inventor of 'Dawn Man'.

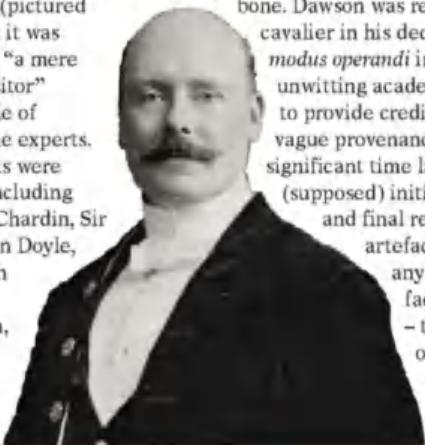
REG SPELLER / FOX PHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES

### THE DAWN MAN HOAX [FT306:57]



Few hoaxes in history have warped science as dramatically as 'Dawn Man'; through professional jealousy, politics, amnesia and wilful blindness, the imposture lasted over 40 years. The discovery of human skull fragments, an ape-like jaw and worked flints in a gravel pit at Piltdown in Sussex, announced by Charles Dawson in 1912, was hailed as the most sensational find in archaeological history – *Eoanthropus dawsoni* was no less than the 'missing link' to prove Darwin's theory of evolution.

Following exposure of the hoax in 1953, the obvious suspect was Dawson (pictured at right), but it was thought that "a mere country solicitor" was incapable of duping all the experts. Many culprits were suggested, including Teilhard de Chardin, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Arthur Smith Woodward, Arthur Keith, Grafton Elliott Smith,



William Sollas, Samuel Woodhead, Martin Hinton, and even that irritating practical joker, Horace de Vere Cole [FT62:24-30]. However, in *The Piltdown Hoax: Case Closed* (History Press, 2012), Miles Russell persuasively argued that Dawn Man was invented by Dawson, a very active archaeological hoaxter. His impressive find record earned him the epithet 'the Wizard of Sussex', but at least 33 of his 'finds' are definite fakes. So too, probably – to the consternation of forteans – is the toad encased in a flint nodule now in Brighton's Booth Museum. The Piltdown "cricket bat" (an essential accoutrement for the First Englishman) had been carved by a steel knife from a fossilised elephant bone. Dawson was remarkably cavalier in his deceptions. His *modus operandi* included an unwitting academic dupe to provide credibility, a vague provenance and a significant time lapse between (supposed) initial discovery and final reporting of artefacts, to hinder any possible fact-checking – though no one seemed to bother with this in

his case.

Now, an eight-year study by a group of 16 palaeobiologists, historians, dental experts and ancient DNA specialists has pretty conclusively made the case against Dawson. The report, by Dr Isabelle De Groot from Liverpool John Moores University and others, is published in *Royal Society Open Science*. A consistency was found in the preparation of all the specimens allegedly unearthed at Piltdown from 1912 to 1916: the same reddish-brown stain was applied to make all the bones look old; the specimens had appropriate local gravel packed into their crevices; and dentist's putty was used to fix the teeth and gravel in place. Critically, the evidence links two separate locations: 'Piltdown I' where the original jawbone and skull fragments were planted and excavated in 1912, and 'Piltdown II' 1.8 miles (3km) away where Dawson claimed to find a matching tooth and skull pieces in 1915.

"Dawson is the only one who ever said there was a Piltdown II site," said Dr De Groot. "He's the only one who was ever associated with it and we can clearly link that molar to the original specimens." The exact shape of molars from the two sites, as well as traces of DNA found in teeth at both Piltdown I and Piltdown II, suggest they all came from the jawbone of a single orangutan. Dawson appears to have removed the teeth, breaking the jaw in the process, then ground them down to make them appear more human and stuck two molars back in the jaw with putty and gravel. Putty was used to reconstruct one of the teeth that had fallen apart while it was being ground down. But planting a third tooth at Piltdown II, a century before ancient DNA analysis became possible, was his undoing. "That has to be Dawson, there's no doubt about that," said co-author Chris Stringer from London's Natural History Museum. "He's the only person uniquely linked with both those sites."

Piltdown hoaxer nailed, FBI abandons search for DB Cooper, and Beast of Barmston Drain returns

It is still possible that someone else supplied the specimens for Dawson to "discover", Prof Stringer added. But the amateur collector, anxious for scientific acclaim, was certainly "the central figure". *BBC News, D.Mail, theguardian.com*, 10 Aug 2016.

### SKYJACKER RIDDLE [FT139:18]



On 12 July 2016, after one of the longest and most exhaustive investigations in the FBI's history, the agency said it was no longer trying to solve the mystery of DB Cooper, the first, and only, successful parachute skyjacker in American history.

On 24 November 1971, "Dan Cooper" – a man in his mid-40s in a dark business suit with sunglasses and an olive complexion – used cash to buy a one-way ticket on Northwest Airlines Flight 305 from Portland, Oregon, to Seattle. (It was a journalist's mistake that transformed him into DB Cooper). Shortly after takeoff, he gave a stewardess a note announcing that he had a bomb and demanding \$200,000, four parachutes, and "no funny stuff". He opened his briefcase and showed her what looked like a bomb.

Instructions were radioed to the ground and money and parachutes obtained. In Seattle, the 36 passengers and two



# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 206. BUBBLY



### The myth

The viniculturist and monk, Dom Pérignon (1638–1715), invented (or at least, accidentally discovered) sparkling champagne when he was the head cellarar at a Benedictine monastery in Marne, northeast France. On first tasting the effervescent wine, he cried out: "Come quickly, I am tasting the stars!"

HUNT EMERSON

### The “truth”

There's no doubt that Perignon is an important figure in the history of Champagne's wines, who made great improvements to the quality, production, and marketing of the reds which were his monastery's most significant product. But bubbles in the bottle, caused by secondary fermentation, were a problem, not an innovation, because they caused the bottles to explode. Perignon, like most of his contemporaries, in fact spent a lot of time trying to prevent fizziness. It wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that sparkling wine became Champagne's best known and most popular export, after advances in technology allowed it to be produced consistently and safely. The Perignon myth seems to have been created in the 1840s by one of his successors attempting to increase the prestige of the monastery. The “stars” quotation appears to have started life as a 19th century advertising slogan. Deliberate, as opposed to random, bubbification of booze began in England – the only country making glass strong enough to contain the fizz. In the 1630s, Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–65), diplomat and natural philosopher, created the first modern wine bottle, which was used to contain effervescent cider – the great West Country drink of which champagne is merely a dull imitation.

### Disclaimer

This is a complicated story, and only becomes more so the more stars you taste, so the arrival on the letters page of corrections and clarifications will be celebrated in the usual manner.

### Sources

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### Mythchaser

Reading in poor light damages the eyes, a Dutch reader has always been told; and reading in bright sunlight does the same. But, he asks, "Don't such luminal challenges simply lead to eye fatigue" rather than lasting damage?



FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:

[www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters](http://www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters)

stewardesses disembarked, while one stewardess and three crewmen stayed aboard. The Boeing 727 took off for Reno, Nevada, while a storm raged outside. Cooper was alone in the passenger section and the crew remained in the cockpit. At 8:13pm, the crew noticed a drop in the cabin pressure, indicating that the plane's rear door had been opened. The plane was travelling at almost 200mph (322km/h) at 10,000ft (3,050m), where the temperature was minus 7F (-22C) and the wind chill factor a minus 69F (-56C) on a raw and stormy night. Cooper vanished, quite literally, into thin air somewhere over southwestern Washington State – along with a parachute and 10,000 \$20 bills in a knapsack. His disappearance inspired songs, films, television shows and books.

A scientific illustrator at the University of Chicago suggested recently that Cooper might have taken his persona from a French comic called "Dan Cooper", a series about a test pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Cooper was never found, but an eight-year-old boy digging on a Columbia River beach in 1980 discovered three bundles of weathered \$20 bills, amounting to \$5,880. It was Cooper's cash, according to the serial numbers. No other hard evidence ever turned up – including the remaining \$194,120. Over the years, the FBI and amateur sleuths examined innumerable theories about Cooper's identity and fate, from accounts of unexplained wealth to purported discoveries of his parachute to potential matches of the agency's composite sketch of the suspect (pictured at left).

By 2011 the FBI case file was 40ft (12m) long and catalogued more than 1,000 suspects, some proposed by suspicious family members, some from deathbed confessions, some suggested by psychics. Among the strangest suspects was Barbara Dayton, a skilled pilot and parachutist, who claimed she was Cooper and staged the skyjacking in disguise as a man when she was denied a job as an airline pilot two years after undergoing a sex-change

operation transforming her from Robert Dayton.

In Ariel, a town in Washington State near where Cooper is thought to have landed, the General Store and Tavern houses a museum of Cooperabilia, sells Cooper T-shirts and hosts an annual DB Cooper festival and lookalike contest. [AP] 12 July; Times, 15 July; D.Express, 18 July 2016.

### OLD STINKER RETURNS [FT342:4]



Animal rescue worker Jemma Waller was driving with two friends through the village of Halsham in the East Riding of Yorkshire sometime in August when she encountered what she believes was Old Stinker or "the Beast of Barmston Drain", an 8ft (2.4m) werewolf said to stalk the Yorkshire Wolds.

"We were driving down this country lane on our way to get some pizza and my friend in the back seat said that he had seen a fox," said Ms Waller, 24. "I looked on my driver's side and saw this beast on all fours which started to walk straight towards my car on two legs. It looked like a big dog, probably bigger than my car, but it had a human face. It also had this cream and grey fur. My automatic reaction was to keep on driving, but thankfully it didn't keep coming towards me. It just turned around and ran off diagonally. Everyone in the car was really shaken."

At a nearby petrol station the friends described what they had seen, and staff told them about the Beast of Barmston Drain. "We had never heard about it before," said Ms Waller, "but when we started reading up about it, it was exactly like what we saw." Sightings of Old Stinker are believed to date back to the 18th century. In one report from the 1960s, a lorry driver said a creature had tried to smash its way through his windscreens as he drove along a remote Wolds road. Hull Daily Mail (online), 29 Aug 2016.



## NECROLOG

### THE EARL OF HADDINGTON

In March 1943, when John Baillie-Hamilton was little over a year old, a German Junker bomber crashed near Mellerstain, his ancestral home in Berwickshire. Following the explosion, he was "persecuted" by the ghost of a crew member and left mute for three months to the dismay of his parents; even in his final years he could graphically recall this spectre as a "political man, obviously the enemy". Thus began the mystical journey of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Haddington whose life and work would be consistently informed by an awareness of natural magic.

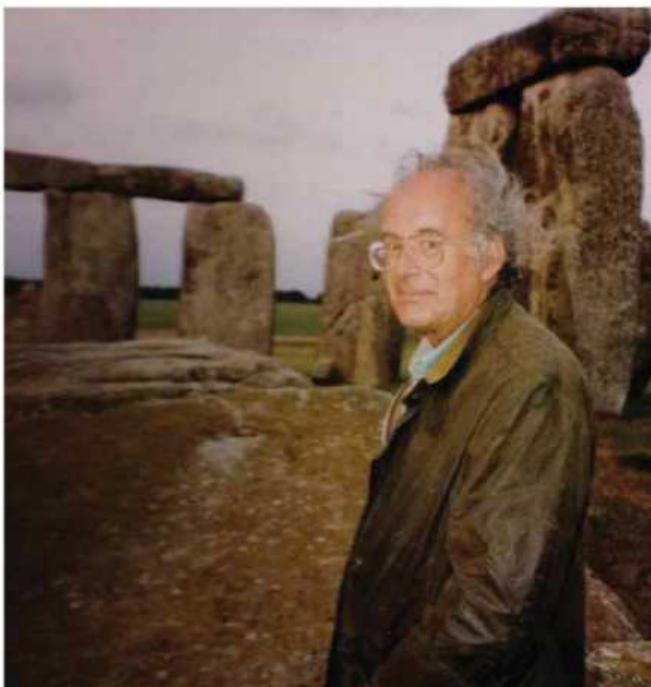
He was born on the winter solstice 1941 in the west wing of Mellerstain House and his lucky number was 13. Schooled at Carlkemp, then Ampleforth, amidst the institutional cruelty of boarding school in the 1950s, he kept himself entertained with motorbikes, explosives, and the inter-school gun trade – whereby pupils would trade their fathers' pistols through the post. He spent two years at Tours University in France, and attended Trinity College, Dublin, and the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

He then worked as a photographer, living in Beirut, London, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. He explored the Amazon by hovercraft and was briefly detained after being mistaken for the French Marxist agitator Regis Debray. He also enjoyed hot air ballooning and breeding racehorses. He ran Mellerstain – a masterpiece by Robert Adam – as a tourist attraction with his wife Jane, developing the grounds and adapting to the challenges of modernity together.

Since his childhood experience, he was no stranger to ghostly apparitions, and once managed to get a surprising photograph of one. Mellerstain House was benevolently haunted, most frequently by The Grey Lady, who would open the curtains and turn down the covers for guests brave enough to stay in the Rose Room. Whilst wandering the astral plane as a young man, he met Gaius

This month we bid adieu to a brace of eccentric aristocrats whose interests ranged from crystals, crop circles and UFOs to Harley Davidsons and hippy festivals...

COURTESY OF THE 14TH EARL OF HADDINGTON



Marius; the Roman general and alchemist revealed hidden truths, and returned a number of times over the years. John later repaid the custom by taking Jane and their three young children to the tomb of Marius in Italy, where a distinctive "tingling feeling" was reported.

A lifelong interest in dowsing, crystals and healing hands earned him a reputation as the Merlin of the House of Lords, where, at exhausting physical cost, he alleviated the bad backs and chronic aches of both peers and staff. He recharged his crystals by placing them in the sun on the windowsill, and usually had one handy, in his pocket or round his neck. He also made valuable contributions to the debate on crossbows, warning of their lethal potential, and for 13 years was an engaged member of the House. He posed for the joke figure of "The Sleeping Earl" in Andrew Festing's group portrait *The House of Lords debating the Queen's Speech* (1995), but lost his seat in Labour's 1999 purge of the hereditary peers. He brought a similar colour to the Royal Company of Archers, Border Union Agricultural Society, Earlston

Community Council, East Lothian Angling Association and Kelso Rugby Club, where he held public positions.

John Haddington devoted much of his life to improving the farms on his estate in the Scottish Borders, so it is perhaps ironic that his fascination with crop circles became his greatest contribution to the world of forteana. He saw his first circle in 1986, and what to most farmers might have looked like a horrendous act of vandalism seemed at once to be a grand mystery with divine implications. He became absorbed in earnest inquiry, "night watching", designing gadgets and recording anomalies, drawing on maps and theorising.

In 1989 he helped found the CCCS (Centre for Crop Circle Studies) and the *Cerealogist* magazine with John Michell, geomancer and sage, Professor Archie Roy, physicist at Glasgow University, and Michael Green, fellow croppie. In 1991 he embarked on an eight-stop lecture tour of the US. He was invited to speak at Chicago University and the Eureka Springs Ufology Conference, where Jane remembered them being the only people yet to be abducted by

aliens.

In 1992 Michell and Rupert Sheldrake held a competition to test the abilities of crop circle makers against the standard of features seen in previous formations. The *Cerealogist* co-sponsored the event, and Haddington presented the prize. Although the quality of circle-making proved to be high, Haddington continued to refer to circle makers with the somewhat divisive term of "hoaxer". It was not enough to show that they could be man-made; he was unable to ignore a lingering uncertainty.

By drawing from a broad library of science, psychology, folklore and astrology, he nurtured a vivid spiritual connection with nature, and the crop circles spoke to him in that way; his beliefs were arcane but not dogmatic, and quite sane enough to hold lively debates with the likes of Matt Ridley, the sceptical *Times* journalist; he would always be the first to laugh at himself.

But as time wore on it seemed to the Earl that the various factions of "believers" (mystics, pseudo-scientists, ufologists) and "hoaxers" (circle-making artists, magicians and mischief makers) had become increasingly embittered and underhand in their attempts to confound each other. Although reluctantly accepting that a team of people could create a decent circle, he remained unhappy with the damage to crops, and with the muddying of waters in what he believed to be a true mystery, worth investigation. He had seen friendships tested and scorn poured carelessly; it was an atmosphere that did not appeal to his gentle nature. Disenchanted, he spoke of the circle phenomenon less, and more privately, but continued to study leys and symbolism and still sent sealed predictions to his lawyer.

A lifelong fortean, he managed to pass on his enthusiasm to his children. At the moment his youngest daughter Isobel was born, he was serendipitously standing in the middle of the Alton Barnes key-ring crop glyph of 11 July 1990 – so he had the



formation carved in stone to mark her birthday. Members of his family often received crop circle-inspired gifts.

The magic of the British countryside was similarly apparent in his photographic work. Highlights include a series of pictures of Stonehenge commissioned by English Heritage, and a unique collection documenting the now dismantled Henry Moore sculpture park at Glenkiln, illustrating John McEwen's book *Glenkiln*. His photograph (above) of a ghostly face in the window of the family's Brougham carriage in Tynningham, taken on New Year's Day 1968, was published in these pages [FT69:65] – as was a picture of a lamb with two bodies and one head, born at Mellerstain Mill in 1995 [FT85:55].

An elegant fisherman, crack shot, and ardent conservationist, he kept chickens, turkeys, bees, reptiles, Hebridean sheep, Highland cattle, finches and canaries; he foraged for rare and exotic mushrooms, and was known for visiting friends with armfuls of local produce. On sunny summers' afternoons, he liked to take a tape recorder into the garden to record birdsong, but, as with his recordings from crop circles, the soundtrack would often be contaminated by the sound of gentle snoring.

In fact Haddington made a principle of the plight of Britain's songbirds as victims of avian and feline predation – long before Bill Oddie stuck his head above the parapet. He set up the charity Save Our Songbirds, produced the

*Bird Table* magazine and invested in several thousand cat collars. The charity was later merged with Songbird Survival, and today has an increasing amount of traction in the public debate on bird life.

His final prediction typified his esoteric optimism. The full details shall remain secret, but in describing the grand finale of the circle saga, Haddington makes reference to the opening of a door, via a climactic formation.

Then, "either we (The bees), are going to be able to leave the Earth (The Hive), be gathered by the Great Beekeeper – and be transported to a new 'Hive' with a new Queen. Or maybe he is going to introduce a new Queen into our existing hive, and release a massive amount of bees in the process. We will have to open the hive door to find out. Either proposition sounds good, and I do not think that we should worry too much. Maybe we will stay here but the spirits of those who have died will make the journey to our new planet, and await a day when they are reborn to a new situation. A new planet, new parents, and a fresh environment. This could be a brutal one or a peaceful and fulfilling one. Who knows?" He cheerily concluded: "There is also the possibility that this is utter rubbish."

John Haddington was diagnosed in 2104 with PSP, a rare neurological condition. He died in the west wing of Mellerstain, no more than 30ft (9m) from the spot where he was born. His first marriage (in 1975) to Prudence Hayles was dissolved in 1981. In

1984 he married Jane Heyworth. She and their son and two daughters survive him.  
*John George Baillie-Hamilton, 13th Earl of Haddington, mystic, born Mellerstain House, Berwickshire 21 Dec 1941; died Mellerstain 5 July 2016, aged 74.*

## THE EARL OF ST GERMANS

Peregrine Eliot, the 10th Earl of St Germans, personified a certain brand of rakish hippiedom. His Elephant Fayre, a festival that took place on his Port Eliot estate, near Saltash in Cornwall, from 1981 to 1986, attracted up to 30,000 revellers, travellers and devotees of the New Age, initially free of charge. Port Eliot, the oldest inhabited house in Britain, some of it dating back to the ninth century – with secret tunnels, hundreds of rooms, and 82 chimneys – had been the family seat since 1564; the festival took its name from the beast that is the Eliot family's heraldic crest. In 2003 the Fayre was succeeded by the Port Eliot Lit Fest, an eclectic cultural fiesta that combined music, literary readings, fashionable catering, stargazing, Tibetan chanting and foraging rambles.

Perry's titled predecessors enjoyed turbulent fortunes. The heir of the 5th Earl committed suicide in the house in 1909 during a village cricket match; his body was found when he missed his turn to bowl. The 6th Earl died following a point-to-point fall, the 7th was incarcerated in a lunatic asylum, while the 8th, Perry's grandfather, was a courtier described as "having all the stiffness of a poker, with none of its occasional warmth". He had a sundial bearing the legend "No man knoweth the hour" built for the walled garden, but put it on the north side, where the sun never shines.

Perry's father, Nicholas Eliot, known as the "Bookie Peer", made over Port Eliot to Perry in 1958 and retired to Tangiers. On succeeding as 9th Earl in 1960, Nicholas changed his telegraphic address to "Earl's Court". He died in

1988.

In the 1960s, Perry drove to India in a VW Beetle and to Tangiers on a vintage motorbike – he afterwards became vice-president of the Harley-Davidson Riders' Club of Great Britain. He regularly attended the Glastonbury music festival and was a great friend of Michael Eavis – they were known as The Good Lord and the Worthy Farmer. "It is futile to recall anything about the festival," Perry reflected, "especially if the whole thing's done on acid." He found it equally futile to discuss the pleasures of hallucinogens with non-initiates, comparing it to explaining the rules of tennis to a crustacean. For a time he ran the Elephant Press from the gatehouse at Port Eliot, and gave board for almost a decade to his friend the poet Heathcote Williams. He commissioned a vast mural from the eccentric artist Robert Lenkiewicz, best known for mummifying a tramp called Edwin McKenzie as a memento mori [FT50:56-57, 166:21]. Once asked by a magazine for an interview, Perry replied: "I would rather spend the time of day with suppurating scum-sucking plague-pit ghouls". The thrice-married Earl is succeeded by his grandson, Albert ('Albie') Eliot, born in 2004. (Albie's father Jago drowned in his bath having an epileptic fit in 2006.) *Peregrine Nicholas Eliot, 10th Earl of St Germans, bohemian nobleman, born 2 Jan 1941; died 15 July 2016, aged 75.*



MICHAEL BOWLES



# the UFO files

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## FLYING SORCERY

PETER BROOKESMITH PRESENTS HIS REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

### WELL OUT OF AFRICA

As the popular cliché has it, ufology is a gift that keeps on giving. If it's not a 'classic', 'impregnable' case having its twiggy legs sacatured off by some pitiless sceptic, it's another one being elaborated upon by some 'unassailable' witness who was there and saw it all. These revivals make new magic in a dusty world and increase the gaiety of nations, or at least the good humour of the world-weary. One such, which falls into both categories above, occurred on 16 September 1994, at Ariel School, Ruwa, a suburb about 20km from Harare, Zimbabwe (Salisbury, Rhodesia, to retired mercenaries and older Africa hands). The event was investigated by Cynthia Hind, perhaps the only African ufologist anyone's ever heard of, the next day, and two months later by no less a luminary than the late Dr John Mack.

Be it noted that a couple of days before, a highly visible UFO streaked across the skies of southern Africa and was seen by hundreds of people, and generated some media attention. 'UFO' at the time, that is: it was later identified as débris from the rocket that launched the Russian satellite Cosmos 2290. UFOs were, so to speak, 'in the air', at least among white Zimbabweans. Ariel School is a pricey private primary school whose pupils, aged between six and 12, include black African children, white ones with forebears from Britain and South Africa, Asians, and those of mixed race – a "cross-section of Zimbabwe" as Cynthia Hind called them. Around 10am on 16 September the children were let out into the playground while the staff had their weekly meeting; one adult, a physiotherapist, was in the tuck shop overseeing the 250-odd weenies. Beyond the playground was a stretch of partly cleared bush and an electricity power line. Cynthia Hind makes the point that this was "still really rough land: long grass with thorn and other indigenous bushes, trees growing in higgledy-piggledy fashion, and undergrowth thick and heavy enough to hide a child should he venture there." The implication is that no child did: "Besides which, no-one knew what dangerous small animals, such as snakes, jackals, unidentified spiders,



scorpions, etc., might be lurking in the grass." According to Hind's initial report (*UFO AfriNews* No 11), some 60 of the children saw "three or four objects coming into the rough bush area"; some said they came along the power lines, "with a whirring noise" and "a bright white, silverish light" coming from them. The largest craft was big enough to be seen above the scrub, and an entity of some kind emerged from it and stood on it. The consensus seems to be that the craft was about 100m (330ft) from the children, and that the entity had long, straight black hair tied back with a headband around its larger than normal head, was about a metre tall, and was dressed in black. Some of the younger African children were afraid that they were seeing the *Tokoloshe*, the local bogey-man who befriends children in order to eat them (see **FT304:36-42**). After about a quarter of an hour the craft, and presumably the entity, "faded from view", whereupon 60 excited children besieged the solitary adult at the tuck shop with news of what had happened.

The headmaster had the wherewithal to get the children to draw what they had seen. Interestingly, Hind notes that the white children labelled the craft a UFO and the midget MIB as an alien. "In drawings from other ethnic groups... the little men were called 'unidentified persons' and the craft... was called 'the machine' or 'the object'."

Some of the drawings can be seen at [www.ufoevidence.org/cases/case127.htm](http://www.ufoevidence.org/cases/case127.htm)

LEFT: A selection of witness sketches by Ariel School students.

[ufoevidence.org/cases/case127.htm](http://ufoevidence.org/cases/case127.htm); note the inconsistencies. Some said the 'alien' looked stick-like; one that it was 'plump'.

Enter John Mack, a couple of months later. (Someone has maintained that it was very brave of him to venture into the area, as if the Bush War that had ended 15 years before were still raging, and in a place it had never touched. Anything to crank up the exotica!) Like Hind before him, Mack interviewed the children in the presence of the other 'witnesses', so the opportunities for contamination were rife; Gilles de Fernandes, a cognitive psychologist and expert in interviewing children, has shredded her and Mack's techniques (<http://skepticversusuthelyingsaucers.blogspot.co.uk/>) and observes how, under Mack's leading questioning, his favourite 'ecological' save-the-planet themes suddenly appear in messages given telepathically by the aliens – something Hind had most incompetently missed, it seems. It's also of interest that of the 62 alleged witnesses only 10 are ever cited in any detail. So what did the others have to say?

Then, this year, one Emily Trim appeared at the 25th International UFO Congress, held at the We-Ko-Pa Resort, near Phoenix, Arizona, to speak about the Ariel School event. On his Bad UFOs blog, Robert Sheaffer reported how, visibly moved, she told of "ETs floating above the ground. She said that she fell to her knees before one such being, whose face kept changing between that of an alien and that of a lion. She has also had a conversation with a magic butterfly." The flame-headed Ms Trim (then aged eight) was not interviewed by either Hind or Mack, and all indications are that none of the children at Ariel came anywhere near any entities or their 'craft'. Nearly two decades on, what precisely the children saw is anyone's guess. But if you want UFO cases that demonstrate how culture and context may colour perceptions, and how investigators can discover whatever they want or expect, this one makes a pretty juicy starter.

## SEEING THE LIGHT

The small community of Paulding, Michigan, close to the Wisconsin border, sits on the frontier between the US and Canada, surrounded by the wilds of the Ottawa National forest. It has one claim to fame and is determined to hold on to it.

That fame stems from the Paulding Light – a mysterious UFO seen every so often if you stand in the right place at the right time: just where the old road towards Robbins Pond from Watersmeet disappears into wilderness. The viewing point is famous enough to have a sign marking out that you are in the right location. It is possibly the only reason travellers visit this desolate spot in the back of beyond, and explaining it away as something ordinary is probably not what many locals desire; understandably, given that hunting, fishing and viewing the light provide the area's main selling points amidst a hostile economic environment.

Modern accounts of the pulsing, flickering glow that appears, disappears, and fluctuates in brightness have emerged sporadically for about 50 years, and it is not only UFO enthusiasts that are attracted to look for it. Local legend associates it with the ghostly appearance of a lantern held by a brave guard who died warning of an impending collision in the early days of the railroad. Such stories have plenty of romance but less in the way of historical evidence.

Yet these days the nature of the light is under assault. The short-lived investigative TV show *Fact or Faked?* made an attempt to explain it, but in one of their rare failures this normally sceptical team of experts ran several simulations on the site using various sources – including an illuminated low flying light aircraft – but none of them convinced.

Greater success was claimed by a team of students from Michigan Tech in Houghton. They believe they proved a link between the appearance of the light and the passage of cars on a highway some miles distant from the viewing spot. The road turns and dips and creates the right conditions to 'manufacture' the Paulding light under the correct circumstances. The 'photo optical' group used telescopes and spectrographs with cameras attached to verify to their satisfaction this 'car headlights' theory. But locals, whilst accepting the possibility that some modern sightings might be a consequence of such a phenomenon, claim that there are stories from Native Americans who lived in the area long before cars or roads existed that support a supernatural explanation of the Light. Others suggest that if this long history is true, then the marshy nature of the terrain may just emit gaseous glows that can become luminous.

Paulding is, of course, by no means the only place to have hooked onto a locally occurring manifestation as a means of self-promotion. You can find similar spots, where legend and recent sightings have been stirred into a heady brew by local tourist boards and businesses, in pretty much every part of the world.

Our local UFO group investigated the case of

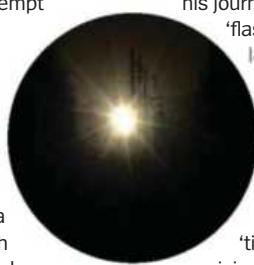


Larry Mayer, who on 19 September 1987 was driving home over the moors to Manchester after a family wedding in Stocksbridge, near Sheffield. He had a 'strange feeling' as he climbed Langsett Hill. A voice in his head told him to slow down on the dark, deserted Pennine road, and over a small clearing in a roadside copse he spotted lights. They were red and white and seemed to be in a strip or circle. The glimpse was fleeting (in fact, when we visited the area and reconstructed the drive, even at very slow speed, the clearing was in view for a second or two at most). Larry drove on, somewhat shaken, and pulled over in a layby to clear his head. The whole area was eerily quiet and he decided to drive on. Approaching the Woodhead area, four miles beyond, he passed an accident with a car overturned on its roof and emergency services vehicles speeding to the scene. Larry inched past and returned home amazed to find he had reached Manchester about an hour later than

his journey should have taken. He then had 'flashbacks' of being in the clearing, looking upwards and seeing a being with a 'pear shaped head' and 'large round eyes'.

In a case such as this the history of the area is always worth exploring. There was quite a record of 'apparitional' events or 'time slips', where locals witnessed visions of people and beings from the past. It would also be easy to create a complex 'alien abduction' scenario here using regression hypnosis. But the evidence of the South Yorkshire police relating to the accident Larry had encountered suggested something different. Two police officers in a patrol car at about the time of Larry's sighting saw some flashing lights low over Redmires Reservoir. This was about four miles south of Larry's position. However, the chief constable himself noted that from the spot on the road where Larry was driving you could easily be fooled at night by lights on vehicles coming over Bord Hill at Flouch. During our reconstruction we had seen these lights ourselves; while they were quite obvious as car lights on that night, atmospheric conditions on the evening of Larry's encounter were different and might be relevant.

Areas inevitably attach strange incidents to themselves, and can gain a reputation that alters perceptions of any otherwise mundane event that next gets reported. And just as with Loch Ness in Scotland, nobody is that keen to explain away the mystery, because mystery creates wonder and with it the desire to go



see for yourself. This can lead to an uneasy relationship between scientific explanation and the need for mythology to remain unchallenged.

In UFO terms, researchers must strive to resolve a mystery and not promote it. Often, of course, that is just what many isolated witnesses will want too, especially if they feel that their precarious place in the Universe is threatened by a light they saw on a lonely road at night. It can be reassuring to be told that it was not something from Proxima Centauri B stopping them in their tracks, just the midnight cargo flight from Glasgow with its engines throttled back and its cabin lights extinguished.

Not so – though – if the event is turned from an isolated personal trauma into a phenomenon that can benefit a struggling community. We all love to be scared in a non-threatening manner – hence the enduring popularity of funfair rides or rituals such as Hallowe'en. If someone successfully adopts an event of initial frightfulness and transforms it into a selling point for a particular location, then the quest for truth can morph rapidly into a quest for tourists.

We have seen this again and again in ufology. Roswell has milked its 70-year alien crash notoriety successfully (**FT103:32-33**), and UFO walking trails around Rendlesham Forest (**FT204:78-79**) have helped the local cottage industries of this Suffolk beauty spot no end. In Scotland the small town of Bonnybridge became the focal point of a UFO flap in the early 1990s which was successfully adopted by local councillors as a means to promote a deprived region: they organised skywatches, sought to twin the area with Roswell, and set up call lines to bring in more and more reports (**FT81:27, 83:12**). This cemented the area as a 'hotspot'. Reports breed more reports, and publicising them brings more still. You cannot blame any location accidentally thrust into a UFO mystery from going with the flow. And sometimes this proves very beneficial to ufology – such as in the Hessdalen Valley in Norway, where the recurring light phenomena have seen scientific expeditions monitoring and gathering data in an effort to gain knowledge of the physics involved (**FT103:26-31**).

I even had a role in such a scenario in the 1990s when a businessman tried to create a UFO visitor centre in the Pennine Hills between the Rossendale and Calder Valley between Bacup and Todmorden. Giving skywatchers and research scientists a focal point where reports date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he hoped to attract business to an area that had suffered badly since the decline of the traditional cotton industry. As I was born in the valley I agreed to help, especially as it promised benefits for serious investigation into UFOs. So I gave talks about local sightings to assist the businessman and the enthusiastic mayor in this aim. Nothing ever came of their bold plan, but I am sure it will not be the last time an enterprising community recognises the potential value of strange things occurring in its midst and seeks to derive benefits from the mixed blessing of the latest UFO flap.

# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

64

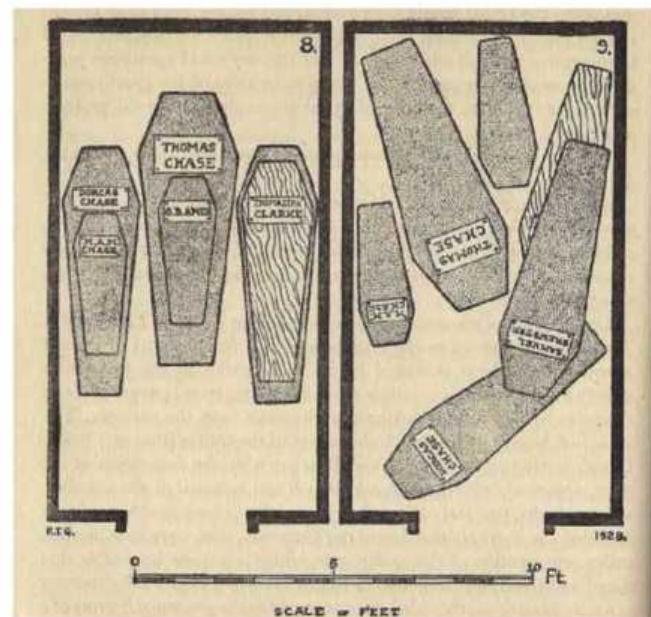
## WHERE THE DEAD DO NOT REST

THEO PAIJMANS disinters some spooky stories of moving coffins and unquiet tombs...

“It is not generally known, that in Barbados there is a mysterious vault, in which no one now dares to deposit the dead. It is in a churchyard near the sea-side...”<sup>1</sup> James Edward Alexander wrote these words in 1833 to begin his tale of a strange discovery in that vault. The phenomenon became known as “the moving coffins of Barbados” and entered fortean history (see ‘Tales from the Crypt’, FT133:40-44).

The vault, belonging to the Chase family, was routinely opened in 1812 to inter a family member. But inside the vault the coffins were found “in a confused state, having been apparently tossed from their places”. Similar disturbances were noted when the vault was opened in 1816 and 1819. “The last time the vault was opened... the coffins were found thrown confusedly about the vault; some with the heads down, others up. What could have occasioned this phenomenon? In no other vault in the island has this ever occurred,” a puzzled Alexander wrote.<sup>2</sup> The mysteriously moving coffins at Barbados gained notoriety, even prompting Arthur Conan Doyle to ponder them.<sup>3</sup>

To add to the mystery there are reports of other vaults where the dead refuse to rest. An account from 1815 describes the disturbances in a vault in Staunton, Suffolk: “On opening it some years since, several leaden coffins, with wooden cases, that had been fixed on biers, were found displaced, to the great astonishment of many of the inhabitants of the village. The coffins were again placed as before, and properly closed; when, some time ago, another of the family dying, they were a second time found displaced; and two years after there were not only found all of the biers, but one coffin as



When the vault was opened in 1812 to inter a family member, the coffins were found “in a confused state, having been apparently tossed from their places”

heavy as to require eight men to raise it, was found on the fourth step that leads into the vault – Whence arose this operation, in which, it is certain, no one had a hand?”<sup>4</sup>

Another instant of strangely disturbed coffins, a horrible case of corpse-combat in an English burial vault, as one American newspaper in 1879 aptly named it, occurred in Lincolnshire. We do not learn where or when. The location is only alluded to as “H-k Hall” in Lincolnshire “in possession of the H-family for hundreds of years”, with only two descendants still alive, the Squire and his brother.<sup>5</sup> The Squire’s wife and only daughter were interred in the nearby family vault. The brother and the Squire’s wife conducted a lifelong feud. “The cause of the hatred could only be guessed

at, even by the most curious, as none was ever assigned by either party.”<sup>6</sup> After the deaths of the Squire’s wife and her daughter the brother moved in with the squire in the gloomy hall, “which had once been so full of life and gayety”. The brother became ill and his condition rapidly deteriorated. A priest was summoned, but when the clergyman breached the subject of the brother’s hatred for the deceased wife of the Squire, the brother burst out: “I know that I am dying; but mark my words, if, when I am dead, you dare to bury me in the same vault with that accursed woman, the living as well as the dead shall hear of me!”

The brother died and was buried in the family vault, next to the coffins of the woman he so detested in life and her daughter. That night

LEFT: The positions of the coffins in the Chase vault when it was closed up on 17 July 1819 and again when it was reopened on 18 April 1820.

the villagers living near the churchyard heard shrieks and cries coming from the vault, “a noise of strife and struggling and blows, as if of enemies engaged in close fight”. The next morning, an alarmed Squire, the parish priest and a party of men entered the vault to examine the cause of the strange noises heard the night before. “A scene perfectly inexplicable met their eyes. The coffins of the Squire’s lady and daughter were lying in a far corner of the vault, the young girl’s coffin across her mother’s as if to protect it. Close to them, standing erect and menacing, was the coffin of the Squire’s brother...” The coffins were restored to their original places and the vault sealed up. But that night the noises began again: ‘the sound of blows, shrieks of pain, and a frightful contention of struggling enemies...’ Only when the Squire ordered a brick wall to be built between the coffins of his deceased wife and his brother, did the sounds subside. “This had the desired effect; from that moment all was quiet in the vault, and the noise was never heard again; but for a long time afterward the strange story was current in Lincolnshire.”<sup>7</sup>

Another case of an unruly vault occurred around 1847 in the parish of Gretford, near Stamford, as FA Paley claimed in a letter he wrote to *Notes And Queries* 20 years after the alleged occurrences. His father had been the rector there. “Twice, if not thrice, the coffins in the vault were found on reopening it to have been disarranged. The matter excited some interest in the village at the time, and, of course, was a fertile theme for popular superstition; but I think it was hushed up out

of respect for the family to whom the vault belonged." Fortunately, the writer enclosed an extract from a letter of a lady to whom he wrote about the case: "I remember very well the Gretford vault being opened when we were there," she wrote. "It was in the church, and belonged to the .... Family. The churchwarden came to tell the rector, who went into the vault, and saw the coffins all in confusion; one little one on top of a large one, and some tilted on one side against the wall. They were all lead, but of course cased in wood. The same vault had been opened once before, and was found in the same state of confusion, and set right by the churchwarden, so that his dismay was great when he found them displaced again. We had no doubt, from the situation and nature of the soil, that it had been full of water during some flood which floated the coffins. I dare say ... is still alive, and could give the date, and I almost think ... saw what had happened. I feel no doubt myself that lead coffins would float. We know a large iron vessel will, without any wood casing, and I suppose the flood subsiding would move them. The vault had been walled up, so that no one could have been in it."<sup>8</sup>

Nineteenth century spiritualist Baron Ludwig Guldenstubbbe (1820-1873, pictured at right) personally investigated a puzzling case of moving coffins. The disturbances occurred at the cemetery of Ahrensburg at the island of Oesel. Guldenstubbbe was the owner of Ahrensburg and the nearby village of Thale.<sup>9</sup> In 1844, the Baron faced a challenge beyond the forces of nature. He met with frightful disturbances surrounding a chapel with a vault underneath of the

Buxhoeudewen family<sup>10</sup> from the German city of Bremen. When country folk visited the cemetery with horses and carts, they habitually fastened their horses in front of this chapel. On 22 June 1844, a tailor's wife had come with a horse and small cart to visit the tomb of her mother, behind the Buxhoeudewen family chapel. As usual, she fastened her horse and went to her mother's grave. While kneeling and praying there she heard some noises from the direction of the chapel, but paid no attention to them. When she returned, she found her horse "covered with sweat and foam, its limbs trembling, it appeared to be in mortal terror". Led off, it could scarcely walk. Then other people reported that their horses had shown similar reactions when fastened near the chapel. One day, 11 horses were fastened nearby. "Some persons hearing loud noises, as if issuing from beneath the building, raised the alarm; and when the owners reached the spot, they found the poor animals in pitiable condition". In their frantic efforts to escape that dreadful place, several horses had thrown themselves to the ground and lay struggling there. Others could hardly stand or walk. Four horses died the next day. Around that time, a member of the Buxhoeudewen family died. At the funeral, strange groans were heard from beneath. Horses attached to the hearse and mourning coaches were agitated. When a party entered the vault, they found that the numerous coffins interred there had been displaced and were lying around "in a confused pile". Nobody could think of an

explanation, as the doors to the vault were always locked and the locks showed no signs of tampering.

Baron Guldenstubbbe visited the vaults and created an investigation committee consisting of himself, a physician named Luce, local burgomeister Schmidt and a secretary. They found that all the coffins had been displaced except those of the grandmother and two young children. Guldenstubbbe ordered that the coffins be put back in place, noting their exact positions. The doors were locked and double-sealed. Ash was strewn over the pavement of the vault, the stairs leading down to it from the chapel and on the floor of the chapel itself. The Baron also ordered guards from the nearby garrison to keep watch and prevent anyone from approaching the chapel for the next three days. After three days, the committee found the doors securely locked and the seals intact. They broke the seals and entered the vault. The sparse light revealed to the horrified party that the coffins were strewn all over the vault in total chaos. "Not only was every coffin, with the same three exceptions as before, displaced, and the whole scattered in confusion over the place, but many of them, weighty as they were, had been set on end, so that the head of the corpse was downward. Nor was this even all. The lid of one coffin had been partially forced open, and there projected the shrivelled right arm of the corpse it contained, showing beyond the elbow; the lower arm being turned up toward the ceiling of the vault!"<sup>11</sup>

The

disturbances lasted for several more months and only stopped when the family buried the coffins beneath piles of earth. "From that time no noises were heard to proceed from the chapel; horses could be fastened with impunity before it; and the inhabitants, recovering from their alarm, frequented with their children, as usual, their favourite resort."<sup>12</sup>

Upon closer scrutiny, the sources of these stories, which stitched together form a tapestry of a most strange tradition, turn opaque. There are, for instance, no written accounts of the Ahrensburg incidents, except for the retelling by another spiritualist, Robert Dale Owen. He admits in his influential *Footfalls of the Boundary of Another World*: "Never having visited the island of Oesel, I had not an opportunity of personally inspecting this paper. But the facts above narrated were detailed to me by Mademoiselle de Guldenstubbbe, daughter of the Baron, who was residing in her father's house at the time and was cognizant of each minute particular."<sup>13</sup> And in 1907 folklorist Andrew Lang questioned whether the events at Barbados occurred at all, since he could find nothing to substantiate the Chase vault stories.<sup>14</sup> Explanations for these occurrences range from otherworldly animosity between the buried dead to flooding, and more recently a masonic prank was even suggested.<sup>15</sup> Over time, accounts of this kind grew in number, but given the problematic nature of their sources it is perhaps best to regard them not as proof of the dead refusing eternal rest, but of entertaining tales living on. As Lang wryly noted: "We all know that stories never die."<sup>16</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> JE Alexander, *Transatlantic Sketches*, Vol 1, 1833, p161.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp162-163.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Law of the Ghost', *Strand Magazine*, Dec 1919.

<sup>4</sup> 'The curious vault at Staunton, Suffolk', *The European Magazine and London Review*, Vol 68, July-Dec 1815, p226.

<sup>5</sup> 'Ghost Stories', *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 23 Feb 1879; 'A Hideous Recital',

*Kalamazoo Gazette*, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 25 Feb 1879; 'A Ghostly Feud. The Dead Fighting in Their Graves', *Portland Daily Press*, Portland, Maine, 26 Feb 1879; 'Ghost Stories', *The Atlantic Monthly*, Mar 1879, pp289-291; 'A Ghostly Feud. The Dead Fighting in Their Graves', *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 12 Mar 1879; 'A Ghostly Feud. The Dead Fighting in Their Graves', *San Francisco Bulletin*, San Francisco, California, 5 Apr 1879; 'Post-Mortem Pranks.

Ghostly Disturbances In Vaults and Graveyards', *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, 12 May 1879.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> 'Disturbances of Coffins in Vaults', *Notes And Queries*, 9 Nov 1867, p371.

<sup>9</sup> Prof Dr PAFR Poffart, *Das Kaiserthum Russland, Zweiter Teil, Topografie*, Stuttgart, 1841, p390.

<sup>10</sup> Spelled as Buxhödwen, a count

Friedrich Wilhem von Buxhödwen already possessed lands in the duchy of Bremen in 1185. See: *Allgemeine Deutsche Real-Encyclopaedie für die gebildeten Stände*, zweiter Band, Leipzig, 1827, p336.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Cemetery Of Ahrensburg. Disturbances In A Chapel In The Island Of Oesel', *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, 6 Oct 1860; 'The Cemetery Of Ahrensburg', *Frank*

*Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, New York, New York, 10 Mar 1866, pp397-398.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

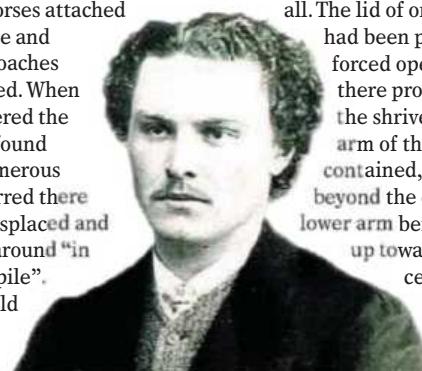
<sup>13</sup> Robert Dale Owen, *Footfalls of the Boundary of Another World*, pp260-269. Andrew Lang notes that psychical researcher Frank Podmore remarked that in regards to the Ahrensberg incidents "the evidence is at third-hand, and that nobody professed to have seen the official documents".

Attempts to find the official documents were in vain. Andrew Lang, 'Death's Deeds: A Bi-located Story', *Folklore*, Vol. XVIII, 1907, p379. See also *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. XIII, 1907-1908, pp30-32.

<sup>14</sup> Lang, op cit., pp376-390.

<sup>15</sup> Joe Nickell, 'Barbados Restless Coffins Laid To Rest', *FATE*, April & May, 1982, pp 50-56, 79-86.

<sup>16</sup> Lang, op cit., p376.



# ATTACK OF THE KILLER CLOWNS

This autumn has seen creepy clowns on the march as the craze spread from the US to Europe and beyond, with schools on alert, threats on social media, and increasingly violent altercations.

**PAUL SIEVEKING** grapples with a tsunami of sightings to bring you the most comprehensive collation of current coulromania yet assembled.

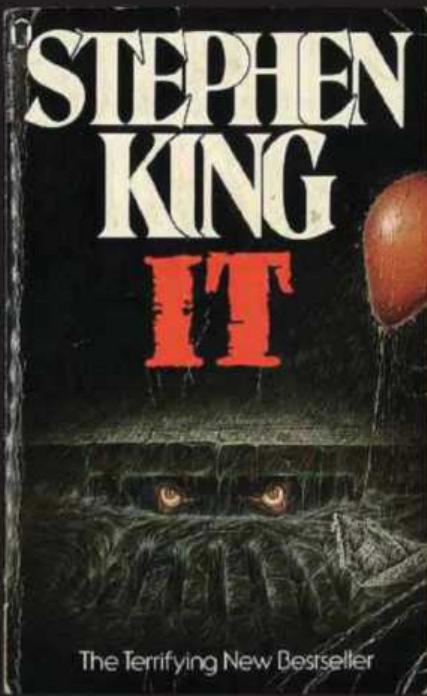
**A**s we predicted last issue, the wave of creepy clowns gathered force in September and October. *Fortean Times* has reported clown scares every few years for the last three decades. One spread across both the US, France and Holland in October 2014 [FT321:4], but the current wave has been amplified more than ever online and by local TV news stations, with footage of dimly lit masked figures and screaming witnesses.

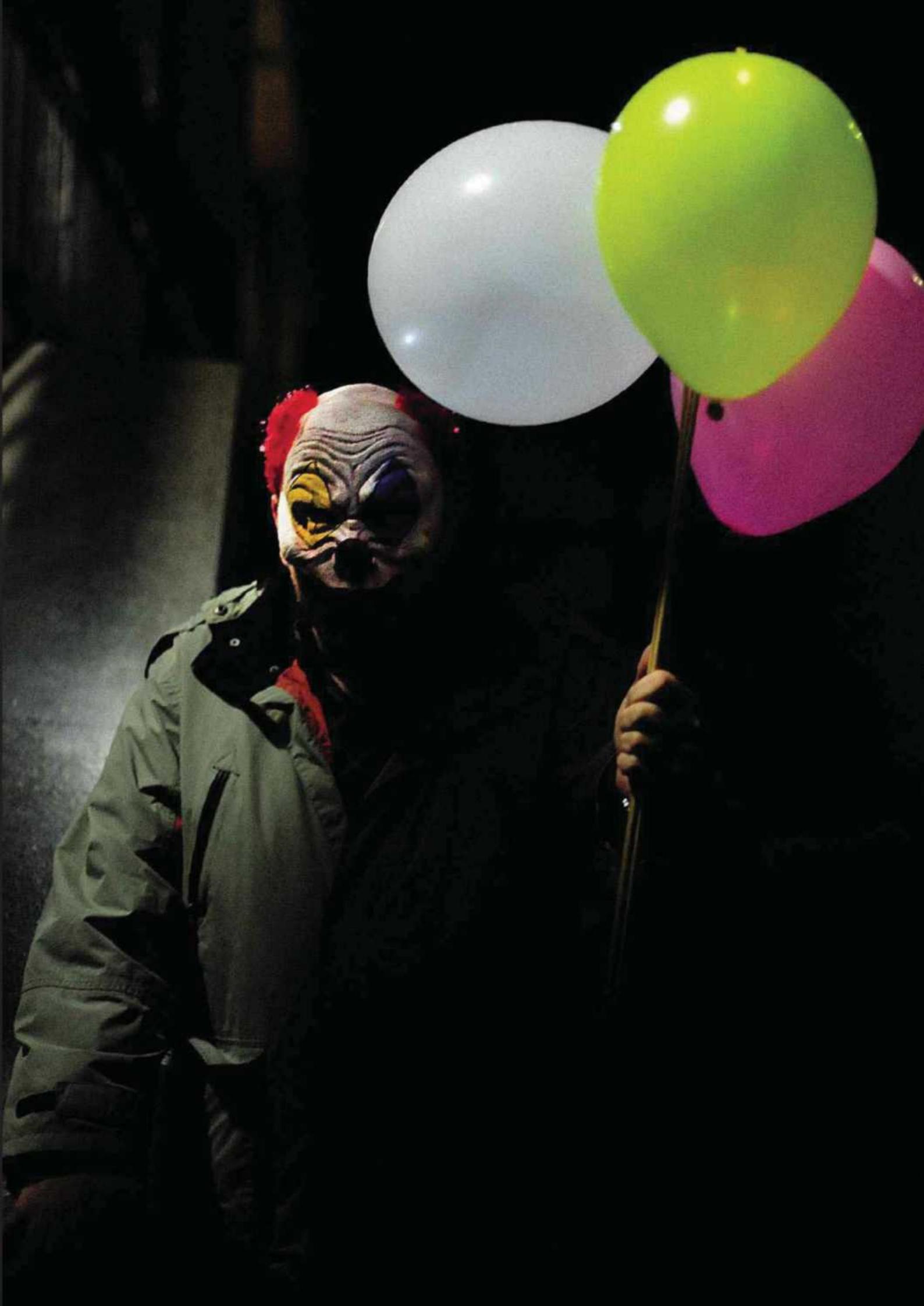
Robert Bartholomew at Botany College in New Zealand, a veteran investigator of mass hysteria, said the current clown scare is a result of two rising forces in the US: social media, and a fear of otherness. "Social media play a pivotal role in spreading these rumour-panics which travel around the globe in the blink of an eye," he said. "They are part of a greater moral panic about the fear of strangers and terrorists in an increasingly urban, impersonal, and unpredictable world... Phantom clowns are essentially the bogeyman in a different cultural guise." Most individuals participating in the clown craze are not

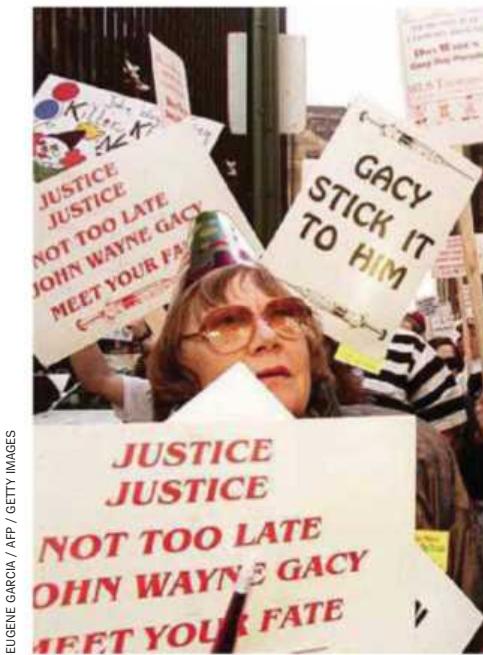
malevolent, merely narcissists. However, one of the unintended consequences of their behaviour is to provide another focus through which society's sense of insecurity can intensify.

The current wave of what we might call 'coulromania' began on 19 August in Greenville, South Carolina [FT346:8-9], when a little boy at a low-income apartment complex told his mother, Donna Arnold, that he had met two clowns in the woods, one with a red fright wig and the other with a black star painted on his face. They whispered to him, trying to lure him to an apparently abandoned house in a shaded hollow. While it may be just coincidental, three days earlier, pictures were published of Pennywise the clown in a new film of Stephen King's *It*, due for release in September 2017.

The first few sightings this year conformed to the 'phantom clown' phenomenon, memorialised by erstwhile FT columnist Loren Coleman in his *Mysterious America* (1983). Coleman described how in the space of a single month in 1981, children







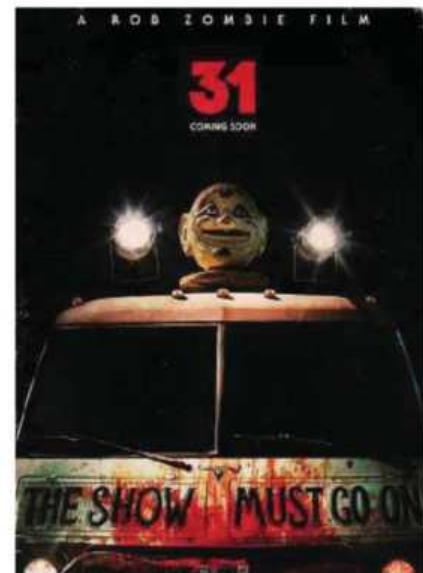
EUGENE GARCIA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

in Boston and at least five cities right across the US reported meetings with uncatchable (and seemingly imaginary) clowns, who typically tried to abduct them in white vans. Since the advent of the Internet, phantom clowns have increasingly been overtaken by more corporeal 'stalking clowns'. One of the first of these to feature prominently online appeared in Nottingham, UK, in September 2013 [FT311:20-21].

The meme of the creepy clown was boosted by the "killer clown" John Wayne Gacy, who sexually assaulted and killed at least 33 teenage boys and young men in the 1970s, burying most of them under his house in Norwood Park, Illinois. Gacy, who had a pleasant personality and entertained children as "Pogo the Clown", was executed in 1994. Over the last 30 years there have been around 200 films and TV shows depicting bad clowns, most memorably Pennywise and Jack Nicholson's Joker in *Batman* (1989). And who could forget the Chiodo brothers' *Killer Clowns From Outer Space* (1988)?

However, it's misleading to ask when clowns turned bad, for a dark side has always lurked just below their caricatured features and painted smiles. Clowns and jesters are strikingly ambiguous characters, neither clear heroes nor villains, but either or both at different times to suit their murky purposes. Momus, god of clowns, was the grandson of Chaos; Discord, Death and the Furies were his siblings. Clowns appear before us in disguise: *maskharat*, Arabic for clown, gives us the English 'mask'.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1972), Joseph Campbell noted that in mythology the clown and evil are inextricably linked: "Universal too is the casting of the antagonist, the representative of evil, in the role of the clown. Devils – both the lusty thickheads and the sharp, clever deceivers – are always clowns... They are the mistakers of shadow for substance: they symbolize the inevitable imperfections of the realm of



LEFT: Demonstrators supporting the execution of 'Killer Clown' John Wayne Gacy in Chicago, 1994.  
BELOW: A poster for Rob Zombie's film 31.  
BOTTOM: Gacy as himself and as 'Pogo the Clown'.

shadow, and so long as we remain this side of the veil cannot be done away."

Asked about the current wave of clowns, Stephen King said: "I suspect it's a kind of low-level hysteria, like Slender Man, or the so-called Bunny Man, who purportedly lurked in Fairfax County, Virginia, wearing a white hood with long ears and attacking people with a hatchet or an axe. The clown furor will pass, as these things do, but it will come back, because under the right circumstances, clowns really can be terrifying." Bartholomew predicts that the scare will quickly fade after Hallowe'en, "when it will morph into some new evil for society to obsess about".

"Performance crime and justice has changed from a rare to a continuous phenomenon," wrote University of Central Florida criminologist Raymond Surrette last year in the journal *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*. "New media performances are usually created for small homogeneous audiences, but access is often unbounded due to their digital nature. In this new social media reality, the altered nature of a performance has had significant effects on criminal justice."

Some believe the current craze started after a viral campaign for Rob Zombie's horror flick 31; others tried to capitalise on the social panic with their own marketing ploy for a different horror film. Our round-up of clown sightings is only part of the picture; by 4 October, for instance, Loren Coleman said there had been clown sightings in 30 locations in Ohio alone in the preceding few weeks. More than 20 US states had witnessed clown not-so-funny business, which I have chronicled up to 19 October. I have listed the UK sightings separately.



## A CLOWN CHRONOLOGY

This follows on from our narrative last time [FT346:8-9]. Clown reports spread first in the US, then to the UK, followed successively by Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Holland, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, and Finland.

- **13 SEPT** Sightings in Macon, Georgia, and in Ohio, California, and Wisconsin.

• **15 SEPT** Clown approaches a woman in a parked car in Lucedale, Mississippi, knocks on the window and disappears into the woods.

• **16 SEPT** An 11-year-old girl arrested for bringing knife into school in Athens, Georgia, said she needed it to fend off clowns.

• **19 SEPT** Three sightings of a clown in White Hall, Arkansas, in orange wig, wearing jumpsuit and wielding machete. Further reports in Oglethorpe, Georgia.

• **20 SEPT** Four children aged seven to nine, who said they had seen clowns on their way to school in Annapolis, Maryland, are re-interviewed by the police, who learned those reports were unfounded.

• **21 SEPT** A 16-year-old high school student in Beauregard, Alabama, charged with making terrorist threats. Using a Facebook page called "Kaleb Klown", she wrote about going to area schools with a firearm, and threatening staff. Hundreds of students checked out of schools in Lee County, Georgia, after threats by a clown on social media.

• **22 SEPT** – Newnan, Georgia. Rodney Allen Byram of Alabama arrested for 'disorderly conduct' dressed as clown. A clown holding an axe and staring at people reported in Portsmouth, Ohio.

• **23 SEPT** Arrest of Jonathan Martin, 20, dressed as a clown, seen crouching in a wooded area by an apartment building in Middlesboro, Kentucky.

• **25 SEPT** In Reading, Pennsylvania, 16-year-old Christian S Torres stabbed to death by Avery Valentin-Bair, 29, who was reportedly wearing a clown mask. In fact, it was a mask from the horror movie *The Purge*, which was on top of his head, not covering his face.

Three clowns come out of the woods in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, and chase a child. Three more sightings in the neighbourhood the following day. At about 5pm, a clown seen on Hudson Street; at 7:45pm, a jester holding some kind of sword reportedly runs after a child on Shafer Avenue; and at about 9:30, a dark-coloured truck seen driving down Mercer Street with many clowns hanging out the window.

Meanwhile, residents and authorities in Palm Bay, Florida, on high alert since a resident reported seeing two "creepy clowns" staring at her from across a road as she walked her dog. Facebook viral video, depicting a clown standing silently on the side of the road in the dark, filmed in Marion County, Florida. Clown matches



LEFT: This clown spread panic in Henrico County, Virginia, but turned out to be a 12-year-old autistic boy in a Pennywise costume. BELOW: Johnathan Martin was arrested after lurking in a wooded area in Middlesboro, Kentucky. BOTTOM: This Facebook video showed a clown standing by a dark roadside in Marion County, Florida.

## CLOWNS WERE PLANNING TO ATTACK TWO MORE SCHOOLS



description of another creepy carnival act, reported to be hanging out near the edge of a forest in nearby Augusta County, Virginia, the day before. In Greeley, Colorado, a clown-oriented Facebook post threatens a shooting on Hallowe'en night, and claims that clowns are planning to attack two area schools.

• **26 SEPT** A group of children near an elementary school in Northampton County, Pennsylvania, tell police three people dressed as clowns chased them. The clowns reportedly got into a white vehicle. Police investigated, but found no people or vehicles matching the descriptions. The reports follow two within 12 hours a week earlier in Easton, Pennsylvania, and similar sightings in Huntingdon County, near Harrisburg. One sighting in Henrico, Virginia, turns out to be caused by a 12-year-old autistic fan of Stephen King's *It*, wearing a Pennywise mask.

• **27 SEPT** Schools in Gallatin County, Kentucky, receive a "vague threat of violence"—two clowns had threatened to shoot high school students. School attendance drops to 48 per cent. The sheriff warns that people behind "clown threats" might face charges of "inducing panic and terroristic threatening." A mother in Evansville, Indiana, goes ballistic on Facebook after reports of clown sightings and her kids allegedly were threatened by clowns. Photos alleged to be of clowns in Evansville turn out to be recycled from Wasco, California, in 2014.

• **28 SEPT** – Two teenagers in Henrico County, Virginia, face charges after they chased children while wearing clown masks. A clown dressed in an orange jumpsuit with spiked hair and a demonic mask spotted cycling down the street in Yuma, Arizona. As Hallowe'en loomed, people in at least 10 states made both vague and direct threats, some under the hashtag #WeNotClowninAround.

• **30 SEPT** School officials in Lindenhurst, Long Island, say they would be keeping students inside during recess after several reported clown sightings in the area. In Pottsville, Ohio, two clowns jump out of a truck and yell at a group of kids and teenagers. In one Cincinnati suburb, half the students stay at home after a clown grabbed a woman's neck and threatened a local school. In one clown-related 911 call from Franklin, Ohio, a woman can be heard fighting back tears as she explains that a clown approached her outside her apartment, forcing her to flee inside and lock the door. A high school student in Gallatin County, Kentucky, arrested for using clown images to make vague threats against the school district.

By late September, police departments began taking social-media fuelled performance crimes increasingly seriously. Sheriff JR Smith of Cross County, Arkansas, warned on his Facebook page that anyone dressing as a clown to hide identity or scare people faced arrest. "Not one citizen should be or will be subjected to this act of foolishness," he declared. Police Chief Tim Lentz in Covington, Louisiana, said that clownish pranksters would be charged with "terrorising" the community if caught.

**1 OCT** Photos surface on social media of a man dressed as a clown holding a rifle and standing on a railroad bridge about 60 miles north of New York City.

**2 OCT** Two schools in Ogden, Utah, are locked down as a precaution after a Facebook user with the picture of a clown made threats, and reports of a clown in the area.

**3 OCT** Police in Baytown, Texas, arrest two teenagers dressed in black and wearing clown masks, who were chasing people around a public park. One of them was holding a large tree branch in each hand. A 13-year-old girl from Hampton, Virginia, arrested for allegedly appealing to a person on social media, using a clown image as their profile picture, to kill one of her teachers at Davis Middle School. Students at Merrimack

## Clown Threat Targets Schools

Published 09/29/2016 10:58AM

Updated 09/29/2016 11:13AM

 **Aint Clownin Around**  
17 hours · 48

We will be at all High schools this Friday to either kidnap students or kill teachers going to they care ...  
#WeNotClowninAround

character of a lynch mob. Several schools in Sacramento, California, on high alert after threats by creepy clowns on social media. Worried students in Wichita, Kansas, mistake three utility workers, dressed in safety gear and white helmets, for clowns. Nine-year-old boy in Sterling Heights, Michigan, claims he was cut by a clown wielding a knife. Several creepy clown sightings round schools in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

**5 OCT** Knife-wielding clown intimidates passengers on subway in New York before chasing a teenager out of the 96th Street station on Lexington Avenue. (He turns himself in a week later). A clown tries to snatch a one-year-old baby girl from her mother at a bus stop in Concord, California. A black SUV pulls up outside a house in Auburn, Maine, and a clown rolls down a window and mimes shooting a woman sitting on her porch. The 49-year-old picks up her own real gun and says, "Back at ya, clown." SUV drives off. In Pampa, Texas, a man sees off two clowns entering his front yard. They ignore his request to leave, so he retrieves a pistol and fires a warning shot. The clowns scarper. In Canada, two clowns chase students at a school in Toronto, and more are reported in Sudbury, Ontario. Clown reported 'lurking' behind a school in Wellington, New Zealand.

College, Massachusetts, told to stay indoors after a person dressed as a clown was reportedly seen with a weapon on campus. The tweet that alerted authorities was then determined to be a hoax.

**4 OCT** Three clowns jump out at two women in Detroit and start swinging baseball bats at them. After rumours spread that a clown was on the loose on Pennsylvania State University's campus, at least 500 (or even 6,000) students set out to find the source of so much concern. This mass clown hunt seemed to combine the light-hearted group dynamic of *Pokémon Go* with the menacing



JAVANTE ANOS / FACEBOOK



TOP: Social media have played their part in the ongoing clown craze, with a number of threatening hashtags such as #WeNotClowninAround appearing on Twitter.

ABOVE LEFT: A clown holding a rifle stands on a bridge in the Hudson Valley about 60 miles north of New York City. A series of similar photos went viral.

ABOVE RIGHT: Arizona was another state that became consumed by the clown panic in late September, with police and schools on high alert after a series of sightings and online threats; this orange-clad clown was photographed cycling through Yuma, Arizona, on 28 September.

**6 OCT** *InsideHigherEd* reports that clowns had appeared at “the universities of Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, Miami, Missouri at Columbia and Texas at Austin” as well as “Bloomburg, Butler, Sacred Heart, Texas A&M, Syracuse Universities [and] Mississippi and York Colleges.”

Man in clown mask and boxing gloves arrested after shadow-boxing towards students outside a school in Portland, Oregon. Four 13-year-old boys charged with making clown threats to students in Olney, Maryland, via social media. A student calls out “Clowns!” in a crowded quad in Leavitt Middle School in Las Vegas, causing a stampede that injures six students.

**7 OCT** Police in Massachusetts plan to charge man in scary clown mask who chased his child’s school bus. Clown with taser seen lurking in Bozeman, Montana. A man in Perth, Australia, claims a clown with a baseball bat charged his car. Clowns sighted in Minto, Ingleburn and Campbelltown, Australia.

**8 OCT** Teenager in clown costume carrying a knife arrested in Minnesota. Group of clowns frightening children in Rankin Inlet, Canadian Arctic. Two clowns assault young woman in Hamilton, New Zealand. In Adelaide, Australia, a clown attacks a young girl and tries to steal her phone.

**9 OCT** Three teenagers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, wearing clown masks arrested after being found with a “possible firearm”.

**10 OCT** Clown armed with knife and hammer seen lurking at night in the town of Oss, Netherlands.

**11 OCT** Seven clown sightings in Portales, New Mexico, in previous week. Axe-wielding clown rampages through Athgarvan, Co Kildare, Ireland. Several reports of ‘horror clowns’ carrying knives and creeping up on children in Almere, Netherlands. In 2014, the Netherlands endured a wave of creepy clowns known as cromiclowns (a pun on the children’s hospital charity Cliniclowns). A clown seen running at a car in Nes, southeastern Norway, waving a hockey stick. It turns out to be a 14-year-old boy, whose friends were filming the stunt. Other clowns frighten girls in Eidsvåg, western Norway. Further north, two clowns carrying an umbrella and a toy sword are seen in Bodø on the Arctic Circle.

**13 OCT** Matthew Cox allegedly approached by two clowns in Laporte, Indiana, one holding a sledgehammer. He fells one with a punch, but the clown pulls a knife, which Cox knocks out of his hand and pummels him. Both clowns run off. Later shown up as hoax.

Women in Sweden threatened by knife-wielding clowns in Skänninge. Man in Varberg stabbed in shoulder by clown, a day after clowns with chainsaws threatened four 10-year-olds. Swedish police deluged with 70 menacing clown reports in 24 hours – in Ronneby, Falun, Svedala, Dalarna, and elsewhere.

**15 OCT** Clown holding a gun seen inside car in Rosepine, Louisiana. Clown punches man in the face in Picton, Ontario, Canada.

In the lead-up to Hallowe’en, sales of clown masks across the US were up 300 per cent on



TOP: Hundreds of students turned out for a mass clown hunt at Penn State on 4 October. ABOVE: By early October the clown craze had spread to Scandinavia; this clown carrying an umbrella was seen in Bodø, Norway.

last year. Ronald McDonald was prudently keeping a low profile. Following various assaults on clowns by vigilante groups, there was a #Clownlivesmatter march planned for Tucson, Arizona, organised by ‘real’ clowns, who fear for their lives, let alone their livelihoods. A flyer advertising the event said it was “a peaceful way to show clowns are not psycho killers”. However, the march was cancelled after multiple death threats. It’s a tough moment for professional clowns. But David Kiser, Ringling Bros’ clown expert, said they will never disappear completely. “They will have to evolve,” he said. “But clowns hold up a mirror on society, so we can see the absurd in ourselves. So to be afraid of them is ultimately to be afraid of yourself.”

**16 OCT** Two men, one dressed as clown, arrested in Dunedin, New Zealand. Three clowns injure a man in Falköping, Sweden, after attacking him with broken bottle. Other

Swedish sightings in Ronneby and Dalarna. Axe-wielding clown chases man in Holbæk, Zealand, Denmark. More than 18 “creepy clown” reports across Denmark over this weekend – in Svinnings, Præstø, Holbæk, Mern and Næstved. Armed clown terrifies two men in Wesel, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Scare clowns reported in Genk and As in Belgium.

**18 OCT** Clown holding plastic sword outside elementary school in Plain City, Utah, given citation for disorderly conduct. Cee-Jay Higgan, 16, besieged by armed clowns in her home in Brockville, New Zealand. Three young boys chased by clown with an axe, somewhere in Denmark.

**19 OCT** Clowns (one carrying chainsaw) frighten children in Tuusula, Finland. Another sighting in Järvenpää, with rumours of clown incidents in Tampere, Kuopio, Pietarsaari, Pori, Rovaniemi, and Helsinki.



FACEBOOK / BURNLEY CLOWN SIGHTING



CLOWNSIGHTINGSUK

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The chainsaw-wielding clown who spread panic on the campus of Brunel University; a Ronald McDonald-like clown appeared at the window of McDonald's in Ewood, Lancashire; sinister white-clad clowns in Dwygyfylchi, Wales; a particularly terrifying specimen photographed in a car park in Barnstaple, Devon.

## SCARE SPREADS TO BRITAIN

**21 SEPT** Cross-dressing clown wearing washing up gloves robs Co-op store in Middleton-in-Teesdale, Co. Durham.  
**24 SEPT** 'Yobs' wearing horror clown masks shout at and chase people in Minster, Kent.  
**27 SEPT** Man in mask of the Joker (Batman's adversary) frightens children in Ipswich, Suffolk.  
**30 SEPT TO 4 OCT** Six reports of children across Newcastle-upon-Tyne being targeted by clowns jumping out from behind bushes. Police said some children were "incredibly distressed". Clowns also reported chasing people in the street. Boy aged 13 arrested for wearing a clown costume, carrying a knife and threatening passers-by.

**5 OCT** Clown spotted driving a Ford Transit van through Liverpool town centre and a schoolboy films a clown standing late at night near a children's play centre in Caernarfon, North Wales (with further Welsh sightings in Llandudno Junction, Dwygyfylchi, and Tal y Bont). Other clowns seen outside schools in Ayr, Scotland. A Facebook page called "Killer Clowns in and around Glasgow" with a photo of a clown said to have been spotted under a bridge is shared 1,000 times before the poster admitted the picture had been taken elsewhere. Cyclist in Eastbourne, East Sussex, left 'terrified' after armed clown jumps out

of bushes in front of him. Rumours of clowns with knives and baseball bats scaring children in Plymouth.

**6 OCT** School locked down in Clacton, Essex, after two girls are invited to a party by two clowns in a black van. Five clowns seen lurking round Sudbury, Suffolk.

**7 OCT** Clown in a 'blood-soaked' hockey mask and poncho seen ambling down street in Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester, pointing and shouting. Clown, carrying a plastic machete and wearing grey tracksuit bottoms, red shoes and a multicoloured top, jumps out in front of a group of 11- and 12-year-olds and follows them to school in Chester-le-Street, County Durham. Six clown incidents in Northumbria in previous week. Man left with bloody nose, ripped jeans and grazed knee after attack by clown in Bournemouth, Dorset. Two girls arrested in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, for dressing as Stephen King's Pennywise. Clown holding hammer seen in Tesco car park in Plymouth. Connor Jones, 18, caught lurking in clown costume near an infant school in Caerphilly, Wales, and later fined £90. Further sightings in Dundee and Norwich.

**8 OCT** Arrest of 13-year-old boy who frightened a 14-year-old in West Bromwich by grabbing his arm while wearing a clown mask. A clown chases a 15-year-old

girl in King's Lynn, Norfolk. Sightings in Leicester, Loughborough, and Coalville; in Loughborough the clown carries an axe. Woman and daughter "frightened to death" by clown lurking in darkness in Brotton, North Yorkshire. A 'killer clown' with a chainsaw causes panic by chasing students on Brunel University campus in Uxbridge, London, an incident filmed and uploaded to social media. Student Kenny Parker (or Ojuederie), 19, arrested. He says he is sorry for causing panic and explains that he bought the chainsaw to record footage for YouTube.

**9 OCT** A 30-year-old man in clown costume cautioned after he jumped out from behind a tree and chased a "terrified" woman through Eaton Park in Norwich, Norfolk. In Kidlington, Oxfordshire, a clown carrying a baseball bat chases a 10-year-old child through a park. Gloucestershire police receive six reports of clowns behaving suspiciously or carrying knives. In one instance a child is followed. Motorist in Manchester photographs two clowns, one armed with a machete, peering in his car window. Clown photographed hiding at a McDonald's in Kidderminster, Worcestershire. And in Sudbury, Suffolk, a boy chased by "several people dressed as clowns".

Thames Valley Police says it had responded to 14 clown-related incidents in 24 hours over the weekend – in Archway, Dagenham,



ABOVE LEFT: 17-year-old Owen Russell needed six stitches in his head after a clown threw a stick at him in Dinnington, South Yorkshire. ABOVE RIGHT: Simon Chinery claims that he was ambushed by a knife-wielding clown in Blackburn, Lancashire, and received a serious injury to his right hand.



Latimer Road tube station and elsewhere in London. A group called Clown Hunters on Facebook pledges to “stop the [clown] craze before it gets out of hand”, following sightings in Somerset (Yeovil, Taunton, Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea). A woman gives birth a month early after being scared by a teenage boy dressed as a clown who jumped out at her in Whitwick, Leicestershire. Young girls in Watford scared after encountering a clown in a car, wielding a butter knife. Simon Chinery, 28, says he was ambushed by a creepy clown with a knife in Blackburn, Lancashire. He grabs the knife, but it slices his right hand “down to the bone”, damaging four ligaments. It later turned out he was lying and had cut his hand falling on broken glass.

**10 OCT** A man in a clown mask punched in the face when he jumped out on a man in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, trying to scare him. A sign erected in Larkhall, Scotland, said: “Welcome to Larkhall. Bring on your killer clowns if you dare”.

**11 OCT** Killer clown who had terrorised children in Luton chased by police. He climbs into a small car, sounds a novelty horn and speeds away. The police are about to give chase in their car when they hear a loud bang. The clown’s car has come to a stop and the wheels have fallen off. Then the doors fall off. The clown is sitting on the ground, holding on to

the detached steering wheel. The report in the *Evening Harold* concludes: “Eighteen other clowns who were discovered in the car have been released without charge.” We suspect the reader’s leg is being pulled.

Kent police say they have received 59 ‘clown-related incidents’ in just three days (7–10 Oct), and Teesside police receive 18 reports in just 24 hours (in Middlesbrough, Redcar, Stockton and Hartlepool). Clown with fake gun arrested in Hillingdon, west London. Two children frightened by clown in Dagenham, east London. A group of teenagers encounter a clown in Dinnington, South Yorkshire. As the clown runs away, he throws a stick that penetrates the head of Owen Russell, 17, who requires six stitches. Driver in clown mask, seen waving a gun, arrested in Hillingdon, west London. An elderly man attacks a crowd outside McDonald’s in downtown Liverpool. A reporter who happened to be there said: “The man was shouting at the crowd and told me that ‘the clowns were trying to get him.’” Police round the country issued warnings about vigilante groups hunting down supposed clowns.

Theme park bosses order staff to remove horror costumes and make-up before leaving work.

**12 OCT** Gang of children, aged 12 to 13, carrying a hammer and other weapons,

searching for clowns in Gilfach, near Bargoed in Wales. Woman chased into house in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, by clown who then waves a knife through window and letterbox. Threatening clown also seen a few days earlier.

**14 OCT** Leah Newton, 32, and her three young children left terrified after being approached by three clowns in Huddersfield. One tries to take her baby from her car while another brandishes a knife. Berkshire-based Party Pieces, the company run by Carole Middleton (Princess Kate’s mother) continues to sell five different ‘menacing clown’ outfits. One has “a bloodied jumpsuit with terrifying mask with open brain”.

**15 OCT** Clown with machete threatens two girls in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Teenager knocked unconscious and suffers black eye after being assaulted by four clowns in Basingstoke, Hampshire.

**16 OCT** Ellie Turner, 19, and her boyfriend confronted by 10 tall clowns on a dark cycle path in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. The clowns stared at them and followed them, but they ran away.

To be continued (probably)... **FT**

*Special thanks to FT correspondent Brian Chapman, who collated hundreds of clown reports from the US and round the world.*

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# SECRETS AND WIVES

## POLYGAMY IN THE USA

Mormonism has been claimed as the fastest-growing religion in the USA – but can a church whose breakaway sects practise illegal polygamous marriage and preach violent ‘blood atonement’ really shape the American future? **DR EDWARD DUTTON** joined some old college friends for a working holiday among America’s polygamous Mormons to try and find out.

I am nervous. As I wait for the Sunday service to begin at the church in Bluffdale, near Salt Lake City, Utah, I begin questioning what has drawn me here. These people, though neatly dressed and sounding highly educated, want to be left alone.

I only got in at all through making contact with an academic, a Mormon doing research on these unusual worshippers. He’d met me, and my two friends, on Sunday 24 April 2016 at an out-of-the-way gas station and had carefully orchestrated the visit. He guided us to the ‘compound,’ hidden away in a valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains.

My two friends and I had met at Aberdeen University in 2002. We had all done Religious Studies and, with a penchant for the eccentric, we had formed the Aberdeen Avant-Garde Association (AAA). There was Cory, an American Theology PhD who had originally wanted to plant a Charismatic church but had since been converted to Wall Street; Gregor, a Scottish Pentecostal philosopher-cum-librarian; Morton, a Catholic-convert Latin lecturer, now deceased, and myself. In 2013, Cory and I had visited a Tennessee snake-handling church. There were no nerves then. Not like now.

We enter a huge meeting room in which some 600 people are seated. There is to be no photography in the service and it is touch-and-go whether anybody will speak to me at all. Then a kindly sounding 74-year-old introduces himself. Steve Bardsley, soft spoken and mannered, was seemingly extremely popular. As people filed in, they *all* said ‘hello’ to Steve, often hugging or kissing him. “You seem to know everyone!” commented Cory.



### MORMONS BELIEVE THAT THEIR LEADER IS A PROPHET

“Yeah, these are my people!” smiled Steve, proudly, gesticulating towards a whole section of the church.

“What, these are your friends?”

“No. This is my family!” Steve enthused, pausing for effect. “I’ve got 55 grandchildren.”

### APOSTLES AND APOSTATES

The Apostolic United Brethren (AUB) are fundamentalist Mormons, in a state where most people are Mormons. How can you sum up the Mormons, with their 15 million members? Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-44) was told by God that he had to restore the ‘true’ church. Jesus had visited America, and this was recorded on the magical gold plates that became the *Book of Mormon* (see FT332:8). The Angel Moroni, who stands atop Mormon temples, told Smith where the plates were in 1823 and the book was published in 1830. The zealous Smith soon built up a huge following. Driven from New York State, Mormons first went to Ohio, then Missouri (in both cases driven out by hostile locals as the Mormons started to take over) and then Nauvoo, Illinois. Here, Smith dominated the town and was murdered by a furious mob. Prior to his death he had received further revelations, including prohibitions on booze, tea and coffee, and it was revealed to him that men should have multiple wives. Only through polygamy could the highest level of Heaven be reached (Mormons believe in three levels). Smith had 40 wives, one aged only 14.<sup>1</sup>

Mormons believe that their leader, at any given time, is a prophet. Smith’s successor as prophet, Brigham Young (1801-77), was the founder and first governor of Utah. Young led the Mormons to the Utah territory, the New Jerusalem for the ‘Church of Jesus Christ

ABOVE: Joseph Smith, first prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. OPPOSITE: The great Mormon Temple on Temple Square, Salt Lake City, Utah, dedicated in 1893.





COURTESY CLF

LEFT: Members of the Apostolic United Brethren gather at their compound in Bluffdale, Utah. BELOW: Brigham Young, with 55 wives, was a vigorous promoter of polygamy.

of Latter Day Saints' (LDS). Young, who had 55 wives, fiercely promoted polygamy in the 'Mormon Reformation' of the 1850s. From 1882, Mormons were persecuted for the practice by the US government, many being jailed or going underground. The third prophet, a Cumbrian cabinetmaker called John Taylor (1808-1887), who had seven wives, lived on the run and received a revelation reaffirming the need for plural marriage. But his successor, Wilford Woodruff, abolished the practice in 1890 under intense pressure, paving the way for Utah to become a state.

Conservative Mormons were livid. In 1924, the fundamentalist Lorin Woolley (1856-1934) was excommunicated from the LDS for criticising the prophet over plural marriage. Woolley argued that his father had been given authority by John Taylor to uphold plural marriage. As the LDS had failed to do so, they were apostates, and Woolley was the genuine successor as prophet. As a result, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS) established itself in an extremely remote and mountainous location on the Utah-Arizona border, Short Creek (now Hildale-Colorado City), effectively placing itself beyond the law of both states.

In 1951, Rulon Allred (1906-77), who had spent time in jail for bigamy, led a more liberal split from the FLDS. With about

## THEY YEARN FOR THE MORE GODLY WORLD OF THE PAST



8,000 members, the AUB, now led by Lynn Thompson, is the largest polygamous sect. Sizeable portraits of Smith, Young and Taylor adorn the focal point of the church, seemingly as objects of worship. And like all fundamentalist churches, the group feels persecuted, yearns for the more Godly and uncorrupted world of the past, and separates itself from this one. The preacher, a senior member called Paul Hess, proclaims that: "The world is a bottomless pit" and that the young are dominated by "cheap electronic equipment" which is "absolute silliness that some other person has put together to destroy our minds".

"The adversary [the Devil] has come down to Earth and he's doing pretty much what he said he'd do!" adds Hess, soft-spoken, middle-aged, and, unlike LDS men, bearded. "We share love with one another. There are those in this world that would stop this if they could!" he states, with all the passion of the convert to polygamy that he is. "We don't have a Joseph Smith, but we need one!" he pleads.

I am told in no uncertain terms not to take communion – partaking of the bread and water is no problem in LDS churches – and, after two hours, the rather serious service concludes. I have asked Steve if he'll be interviewed, but he's obviously wondering what the church elders, or 'Priesthood Council', might think. Polygamy – which,



**ABOVE LEFT:** Following the service, Steve Bardsley and Aaron Dale provide some insight into their beliefs. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Harry Bonnell and Janie Bardsley, one of Aaron's two wives. **LEFT:** Rulon Allred, founder of the breakaway polygamous sect that became the AUB. **BOTTOM:** Evril LeBaron had various rivals, including Allred, murdered.

Steve tells me, is defined simply as stating that you consider more than one person to be your wife – is a felony in the USA. Smiling, Steve approaches the rather severe-looking four-man ‘priesthood council’ on the main stage. Steve seems to like us, is probably telling them this, and returns, happy to be interviewed. This gatekeeper, as he would be known in anthropology, then introduces me to others who’ll happily talk to me as well. We retire to a side room where the extent of fundamentalist Mormon in-group jargon is revealed.

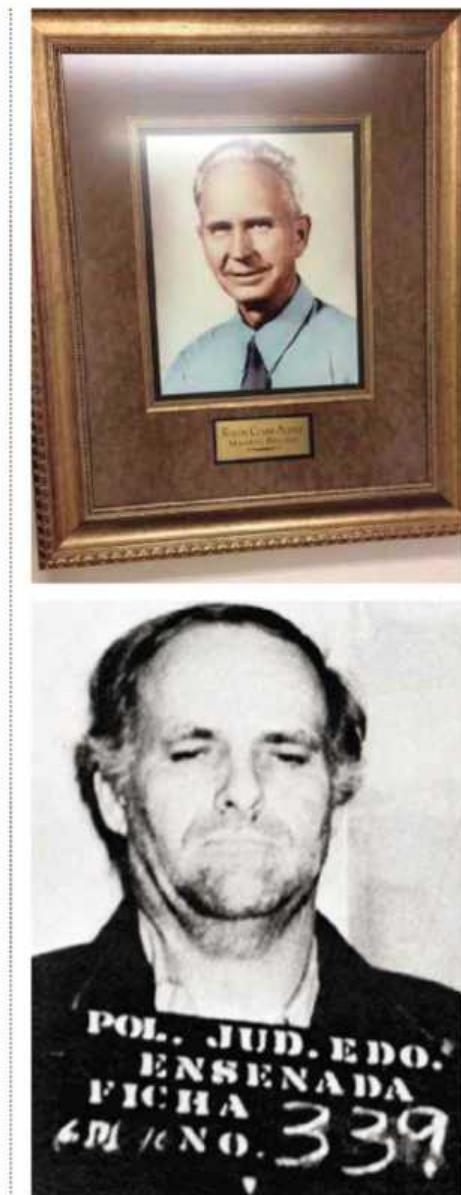
#### ALL IN THE FAMILY

Steve tells me that he was “mainline LDS but in 1996 I was approached by a 70” (a member of the AUB’s governing ‘Quorum of the 70’; the LDS has such a quorum as well). “I realised that outside the LDS people lived the fullness of the Gospel through a plurality of wives.” Steve took a second and then a third wife. “I remember my eldest daughter crying because I’d left the LDS,” he tells me. Unlike other fundamentalist Mormon sects, the AUB regards the LDS as legitimate, albeit wayward, rather than as a group of apostates.

During the interview, the senior member of the council walks in; the prophet is absent that day. Harry Bonnell has an indefinable presence and an intense stare. He sits down and joins us while the others continue to talk to us.

Aaron Dale, a bubbly 53-year-old, converted when he was 12, when his parents also converted from the LDS. “I’ve got three wives and 15 children,” he says. “Everyone takes care of each other and lives as brothers and sisters.” In fact, it transpires he maintains different houses for his different families. The love “acts as a refining fire... you really open yourself up,” he insists, so that you accept plural marriage, because it is ultimately God’s will. “I’ve lost two jobs because of it,” he adds.

His first wife, Janie, 49 and wearing a long



skirt as most of the females do, tells me that she was raised LDS, but “Dad was raised with the teaching [of the need for plural marriage]. He didn’t practise it until he was older and it felt a little weird.” When Aaron told Janie that God had told him to take a ‘sister wife’, “It wasn’t easy. It was very hard. It was like having your guts ripped out. But he held me and said, ‘You’re strong’. I’m not a jealous person. I get on with my sister wife. Her children call me ‘auntie’.” The sister wife, who I later meet, is younger than Janie and a much more introverted character.

Harry Bonnell, aged 65 and a software engineer, converted when he was 22. “I always thought that plural marriage was the correct way,” he tells me. “It is the way in the hereafter. And Brigham Young and Joseph Smith are clear that it is taught by God. God lives that way. It is the way to pure priesthood.” (Male Mormons are all called to be ‘priests’). “It is therefore a principle of what we believe.” But he is careful whom he tells about his four wives, 30 children and “around 30 grandchildren”.

Leaving the church, we notice a portrait of its founder, Rulon Allred, one of whose descendants spoke at the service. Something of a celebrity in his day, he’d appear on talk shows to discuss plural marriage, referring to it as “the greatest pearl”. This only hammers home the potential seriousness of our situation. Brigham Young preached ‘blood atonement’ – that apostates and Church enemies could only be redeemed through bloodshed. The most infamous 20th century example of Mormon blood atonement was seen in the actions of Evril LeBaron (1925-1981). LeBaron led a fundamentalist Mormon community that fled to Mexico in 1890. By 1950, the sect, composed of 30 families, lived in Utah and Mexico and was known as the Church of the Firstborn. In the 1970s, LeBaron had rivals for the leadership of this sect murdered, including his own relatives. He



PHOTOS: EDWARD DUTTON

**TOP:** On Temple Square with 91-year-old Ida from Idaho, who keeps active by answering visitors' questions.  
**ABOVE:** Inside the Salt Lake City temple with our pair of charming and attractive Mormon guides.

also had Rulon Allred assassinated because they came into conflict. His murder, by two henchwomen of LeBaron's, was justified as blood atonement.<sup>2</sup>

We leave the compound and make our way towards Salt Lake City and a brief respite from fundamentalist Mormons. We need it, because what we will soon do could have very real ramifications for our safety.

#### MORMONS ON A MISSION

Near Salt Lake is the small town of Bountiful. It has a modest temple, where Mormon marriages are 'sealed' so they can last for eternity in the 'celestial' layer of Heaven that only Mormons can reach. In Bountiful, we meet more 'mainline' Mormons, the ones you see, immaculately turned-out, doing missionary work on the streets of the UK. I visit the palatial house of the parents of 'Sister Gasser,' a 24-year-old I met outside a branch of Lidl in 2014 in northern Finland while she was on her 'mission'. Mormons do a two-year mission, often starting a year into their university studies, where they live a highly regimented life and spend all their time – apart from when they wash and go to the loo – with a 'companion' who is also a missionary. On the Gassers' wall is a painting of their ancestors making the perilous trek, in which many died, across the Great Plains to Utah in 1847, led by Brigham Young. Unable to drink alcohol, coffee or tea, they offer us peanut butter ice cream. "Mormons are big on desserts!" laughs Sister Gasser. These are stereotypical LDS: polite, friendly, well to do, devout.

The equally friendly folk who run our hotel tell me that they are 'Jack Mormons'. In Utah, where 60 per cent of people are Mormon, these are a bit like Christmas Christians. They're people who've been brought-up with Mormon beliefs, vaguely sympathise with it, but do not tithe to the Church or strongly believe it. They get drunk, smoke and might even occasionally have a cup of coffee. They would not be allowed in Bountiful's temple because, as non-tithers, they would not get a 'temple recommend.'

In Salt Lake City – clean, manicured and, well, Mormon – we go to Temple Square, home to the biggest Mormon temple in the world, the very centre of the Church. Here we meet 91-year-old Ida from Idaho, who answers questions and distributes maps. She did her mission in Birmingham in 1945 and hated England. "You people were real mean to me," she exclaims, punching me in the shoulder, as though it's my fault. She keeps active, guiding people about, because: "If you don't keep busy, they'll bury you!" Tourists are given two missionaries to take them on the full tour. We notice that these are, without exception, females in their late teens. "It's because, when there were male missionaries, people thought they were security guards and didn't want to come in," explains a stunning Brazilian sister-missionary who also tells us in detail about her volleyball skills. Familiar with the Religious Studies concept of 'flirty fishing' (FFing) – the use



ABOVE: Colorado City, Arizona, with copper-coloured mountains in the distance. Among the abandoned buildings is the old FLDS schoolhouse and the home of Warren Jeffs.  
BELOW: FLDS leader Warren Jeffs, seen here in court in 2007. Jeffs had 20 wives and 60 children, and is currently serving time in a Texas jail from where he runs the Church.

of sexual intercourse to proselytise by a 1970s/80s Christian sect called 'Children of God'<sup>3</sup> – we conclude that the current Mormon prophet, Thomas Monson, is clearly a savvy businessman.

#### PROPHET'S PREY

We meet our contact again, as he works in Salt Lake City. He gives us two further contacts from far more fundamentalist and secretive groups, and we make our way through the desert and mountains towards Arizona. These people don't mess about. The leader of the FLDS is Warren Jeffs (b1955) who is currently in jail in Texas on multiple counts of child rape. His father Rullon Jeffs (1909–2002) had 20 wives and 60 children. Warren, manipulating his senile and paranoid father, took over the sect in 2002 and took it in a super-conservative direction, banning media not controlled by him. The women wear prairie dresses and have braided hair and the men give over much of their wealth to the church – worth \$100 million in 2012. When Warren took control, he married most of his father's widows, consolidating power over his siblings, expelled all dissidents, and asserted that followers must have at least three wives. Apostates went to the police, claiming that among Warren's 70 wives were underage girls, including two aged 12. Women who left the community were barred from seeing their children. Former pupils at his school, including males, reported Jeffs had raped them. Under investigation from the FBI, Jeffs took followers to Texas to found a new temple and compound, the Yearning for Zion ranch in Eldorado. He was arrested, heavily disguised,

## FORMER PUPILS AT HIS SCHOOL REPORTED THAT WARREN JEFFS HAD RAPED THEM



while a fugitive in 2006. Warren now runs his church from jail.<sup>4</sup>

Documentaries about the sect, such as the 2015 programme *Prophet's Prey*, show the group to be very aggressive to outsiders, who are usually tailgated and run out of town.

We make our way through the desert to Hildale on the Utah side of the border. The recommended road was potholed and rocky and would have broken the car, so we took the long way around. Copper-coloured mountains reach into the sky. It is quiet and desolate as we enter the town. One of our two contacts is Jethro, who lives here. He's ex-FLDS and invites us to his house, but doesn't really seem all that enthusiastic about it. The other contact is from a related sect. On the Utah side we reach a diner called The Merry Wives Café, which we are told we should visit.

#### AT THE SIGN OF THE MERRY WIVES

It has finally dawned on my friends that the situation might be quite grave. Cory, in particular, is probably better able to read the social signals than a naive foreigner. "These people want to be left alone, Ed," he pleads with me. "Can't you just find photos on the Internet? The risk-reward ratio is just not good. I really don't feel comfortable about this." He doesn't want to go to Jethro's house in case "he gets angry because he doesn't fully realise you're doing an article". He is also concerned about guns. They stay in the car, which two young, rural-looking men in Stetsons photograph as they follow me into the diner. The now three young men tell me they are FLDS.

"Will you talk to me?" I ask.

"I'll talk to you about how this is a good sandwich!" says one, pointing to his burger and fries.

A man in his 60s eats lunch in the corner. They suggest I speak to him. He tells me he is FLDS, but: "I don't want to talk to you. I'm tired of being misquoted".

And then I get talking to a 41-year-old engineer. He looks a bit like Elvis did towards the end, but is very smart. He will talk to me, but whispers that there are many different FLDS splinters in the diner. We need to go outside and he will neither be photographed nor give his name. At this point, my friends enter, sheepishly, and looks of relief seem to cross their faces. They were worried for my safety.

My ex-FLDS interviewee is opening up, and puts David Icke to shame. "I was born into the FLDS," he tells me. "But then I studied the roots of everything. Have you heard of the Khazareem Jews?" he asks. "They hijacked this place and Warren finished off their work." Apparently, the Khazareem Jews – of which Jacob in the Bible is an example – dominate the worlds of banking and politics. The Queen is one, though they originate in Kazakhstan. "And they're based in the City of London. All roads lead back to London!" Rulon Jeffs was sent by God "to infiltrate them and impregnate their bloodline" and "that's what he did and Warren finished the job. JFK knew about the Khazareem, that's why he was assassinated. It all comes back to this place," he adds. "Why do you think we get so many people through here wanting to write about us?" My informant says he is an 'Independent Fundamentalist Mormon.' They recognise no current prophet and are only loosely structured. About 15,000 people identify in this way, some believing they are descended from Khazareem Jews.

Moving to the garage shop next to the diner, I meet 18-year-old Matt Timpson. His uncle, John Timpson, is the leader of a FLDS splinter group called Centennial Park, based

in a town of that name six miles away in Arizona. With 1,500 members, they split from FLDS in 1984 due to disagreements over leadership.<sup>5</sup> Matt, a photogenic young man who will not be photographed, has 46 siblings and his father has six wives.

"I did a couple of years of school and am now doing my work mission," he tells me.



TOP: Mormon girls in Hildale, wearing prairie dresses and braids. ABOVE: The Merry Wives Café in Hildale is owned and run by polygamous Mormons, but not everyone was happy to talk to outsiders.

"I work for two years doing this work and I give all my pay to the church. I just want to concentrate on my job. I like fixing things. I feel I'm a bit of a free thinker!" But he wants to stress he's doing all this "by choice". He has never met an English person before and I'm wondering if this is getting me a friendlier reception than I might otherwise receive.

My friends have now calmed down, though they don't think it wise to walk around. So we drive over the border to Hildale's twin town of Colorado City. It is desolate. The schoolhouse is abandoned. The main church is a wreck. Many houses – all of them with very high walls – are left to ruin and are boarded up. We veer off the main street. The many off-road vehicles have tinted windows. We see one young blonde woman, in a stifling brown prairie dress, take out the trash, and a few children in the blue shirted uniform adopted by males; but this is effectively a ghost-town, a shell. FLDS is gradually moving to Eldorado in Texas, Mancos in Colorado and to North and South Dakota.

#### WHY POLYGAMY?

Throughout our journey, I've been wondering why these Mormons are prepared to risk isolation, ostracism and even jail to pursue polygamy.

For most of human history, the practice has been normal and continues in many tribes today as well as among all social animals. In evolutionary terms, the male has nothing to lose from the sexual encounter. As such, it is in his interests to copulate with as many physically fit and fertile women as possible. Facial symmetry, and thus beauty, is a proxy for physical fitness, so men go for looks and markers of youth. The sexual encounter may render a woman pregnant; so, she wants a man who will look after her and the offspring. Accordingly, looks are less important from the female evolutionary viewpoint. She wants a man who will invest in and look after her and the offspring, and she is therefore attracted to size and status. High status shows that the man has resources and the fact that he's attained this status often means he has 'good character' and will therefore invest in her. Women take status into account even in one-night-stands, which men do not.<sup>6</sup> Anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon found that among the hunter-gatherer Yanamamo of Venezuela the headman has about nine children and multiple wives and mistresses. The lower status the male, the fewer children or wives he has.<sup>7</sup> Among the !Kung of the Kalahari, 60 per cent of males are childless, despite high male mortality leading to an excess of females. The females all want the high status males, and without monogamy high status males will have multiple wives.<sup>8</sup>

Even in the 16th century, the English gentry would have – by mistresses – nearly as many illegitimate children as legitimate ones.<sup>9</sup> In an unstable environment, you live fast and die young; meaning you invest your energy in breeding abundantly. Monogamy will only develop in a highly stable yet competitive environment, where there is



STEPHAN GLADIEU / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Ray Timpson, the patriarch of a polygamist family consisting of one man, six women and 41 children, reads abstracts from the Book of Mormon to his family in Centennial Park, Arizona. Investing in such large families might be the key to the future, putting polygamous Mormons at an advantage when it comes to passing on their genes.

competition against your own species. You win this competition by having a small number of offspring, and a small number of wives, and investing a great deal in them. As you can be fairly sure that the investment will not suddenly be destroyed, it is likely to pay off. Lots of children and little investment, on the other hand, could result in none of the children surviving.<sup>10</sup> The group that practises monogamy will be more harmonious – because most men will be able to breed – and thus better able to survive in a harsh environment. It is no surprise that polygamy is associated with fundamentalism. Extreme religiousness is predicted by stress, environmental instability, and a neurotic outlook that makes the world seem dangerous.<sup>11</sup>

Polygamous Mormonism thus takes this primal impulse for polygamy and the female desire for high status and makes them the will of God. There is abundant evidence that many religious dictates are basically just evolutionary imperatives that make the individual or group more likely to survive natural selection. For example, strict, random rules are tests of membership, which ensure

in-group members are loyal, with the more internally co-operative group most likely to triumph.

Under conditions of Natural Selection, you might think that polygamy would destroy the survival chances of fundamentalist Mormons: the environment of the USA is relatively stable and predictable, so they would be outcompeted by a monogamous group which invested a great deal in a small number of offspring. But we are no longer operating under conditions of Natural Selection. These began to collapse with the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, which led to massive progress in medical science and almost everyone surviving long enough to have children. Now, it is not those who are the best adapted to their ecology who pass on their genes, it is those who have the most children. That is what the fundamentalist Mormons are doing; and they are not just having sex with lots of women and not caring if they get pregnant, as, say, a powerful gangster might. Inspired by God, they actively want their wives to get pregnant and invest as much in the children as their finances allow.

Religiously sanctioned polygamy ensures that the genetic future of at least parts of the USA will be in the hands of the AUB and the FLDS. And even the LDS, though monogamous, are divinely called to be fertile: our ‘mainline Mormon’ friend Sister Gasser is one of seven siblings, and this seems to be the norm. The future of European America is likely to be fairly Mormon in its outlook. On some level, Joseph Smith must have understood this when God told him of the need for large families and multiple wives in order to get to Heaven. **FT**

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**DR EDWARD DUTTON** is a writer based in northern Finland. His latest book (with Bruce Charlton) is *The Genius Famine: Why we need geniuses, why they are dying out and why we must rescue them*, (Buckingham University Press, 2015).

## NOTES

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<sup>3</sup> See James Chancellor, *Life in the Family: An Oral History of the Children of God*, Syracuse University Press, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> See Samuel Brower, *Prophet's Prey: My Seven-Year Investigation into Warren Jeffs and the Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints*, Bloomsbury, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> For more detail on this group see Sanjiv Bhattacharya, *Secrets and Wives: The Hidden World of Mormon Polygamy*, Soft Skull Press, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> See David Buss, *The Evolution of Desire*, Basic Books, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Napoleon Chagnon, *The Yanomamo: The Fierce People*, Holt, Rinehart &

Winston, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> N Howell, *The Demography of the Dobe !Kung*, Academic Press, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Staves, ‘Daughters and younger sons’ in J Brewer, & S Staves (eds), *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, Routledge, 2014, p210.

<sup>10</sup> See E Dutton, D van der Linden, & R Lynn,

‘Population differences in androgen levels: A test of the Differential K Theory’, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 90, 2016, pp289–295.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Dutton, *Religion and Intelligence: An Evolutionary Analysis*, Ulster Institute for Social Research, 2014.

# A CHILD CARRIED OFF BY AN EAGLE!

The *Illustrated Police News* never shied away from a sensational story, and in this feature-length 52nd instalment in our series **JAN BONDESON** looks at how abductions by eagles were reported by the "worst newspaper in Britain" and assesses the truth behind the headlines.

**T**he notion that eagles were capable of abducting children goes back to ancient times, as evidenced by the legend of Zeus and Ganymede. Several 17th-century instances were reported from Scotland, England and Norway. In some of these early cases, the child is devoured at the eagle's nest. In other instances, it is taken to the eyrie unhurt, to be saved by its brave parents, who climb a precipice and shoot the eagle dead. In yet another version, the little boy or girl is actually nurtured by the philanthropic bird; when later accidentally found in the eagle's nest, the child is adopted by some local magnate, and later becomes a famous chieftain or wise woman. The crest of the Earl of Derby features an eagle and child, to celebrate a legend that one of his forefathers was found in an eagle's nest. There are quite a few 'Eagle and Child' pubs as well, featuring an eagle abduction on their signs.

In Victorian times, avian abductions were taken quite seriously. What worse fate for a little child than to be carried off in the remorseless talons of an enormous eagle, then to be torn to pieces and fed to the hungry eaglets in the nest? There was a vigorous debate in the scholarly journals as to whether a golden eagle was really capable of lifting a 20lb (9kg) child from the ground, but in the schoolbooks and the works on popular zoology, there was no doubt that these monstrous birds could snatch even older children away at will. To keep the children safe, the eagles must be made extinct, it was reasoned. The centre of this eagle-mania was



WHAT WORSE  
FATE COULD  
THERE BE FOR A  
LITTLE CHILD?

Norway, where the country people were very fearful of avian abductions, and where horrid stories of children being snatched and their skeletons recovered from eagles' nests abounded. There are also a surprising number of eagle abduction stories in various American newspapers, including the *New York Times*.

The earliest child-snatching eagle to make an appearance in the *Illustrated Police News* is from August 1869: several French newspapers reported that near Mount St Gotthard, a little boy aged between three and four had been taken by an eagle. The boy's father, a carpenter named Fonari, who had been repairing a house nearby when the eagle struck, pursued the bird up in the Alps, armed with a hatchet. He managed to strike the bird some heavy blows, inducing it to descend, and then seized hold of the child. The boy was uninjured beyond the fright he had received, but the agony of his mother, who had witnessed the conflict from the base of the mountain, is easier to imagine than describe.

In April 1880, a three-year-old child was sitting on a stile feeding chickens in Pearson County, North Carolina. A large eagle suddenly swooped down on the chickens, scattering them in all directions. As the toddler ran off, the eagle made a second swoop, and caught the child in its talons. It attempted to fly off, but the

ABOVE: A frenzied father pursues an enormous eagle that has taken his little son, from the IPN, 7 Aug 1869.  
OPPOSITE: A little Italian boy is abducted by an eagle in full view of the child's parents; from the *Supplément Littéraire Illustré de Le Petit Parisien*, 23 Sept 1906.



Paul Deloison



child was too heavy, and it only managed to fly a short distance. The eagle's talons were so entangled in the youngster's clothes that it could not get free, making it easy for the child's father to kill it. The child had some deep scratches, but survived its ordeal. This story may well be true, but the *IPN* illustration is grossly exaggerated, with an enormous eagle soaring aloft with the child dangling from its talons.

Animals attacked or abducted by eagles were considered newsworthy enough to be included in the *IPN*: a cat, a stag and a fox. In March 1889, it was reported that in Somerset, an eagle had swooped down and abducted a small rough terrier dog. Worse was to come in August 1898: in Ungheni, Romania, a peasant woman who was shearing maize had brought with her a little child, which was sleeping on the straw. All of a sudden, an enormous eagle swooped down and carried it off.

In May 1904, the 18-month-old daughter of a Sutherlandshire crofter disappeared from the family cottage, situated a mile away from Invershin Station on the Highland Railway. At first, it was thought that she had been taken by gypsies, but a gamekeeper found the mangled remains of the child in a crevice in the mountains. Both eyes were missing, and the body showed signs of having been fed from by birds. It was immediately presumed that an eagle had swooped down and taken the child, and the story was reported in the *Daily*



LEFT: A child is carried off by an eagle in Sutherlandshire, and its remains are later found in the eagle's nest in the crags, from the *IPN*, 14 May 1904. ABOVE: Little 'Greyfriars Bobby' is taken for a ride by an eagle, from the *IPN*, March 23 1889. BELOW: The American child-snatching eagle, from the *IPN*, 1 May 1880. FACING PAGE: Umberto Guglielmina, a four-year-old boy living in the Italian Alps, is abducted by an eagle; from the *Supplément Illustré de Le Petit Journal*, 23 September 1906.

## A HUGE EAGLE SWOOPED DOWN AND CARRIED OFF THE CHILD



Express and other mainstream newspapers. Two years earlier, an eagle had attacked and killed a deer in Sutherlandshire, and fed from its body until keepers drove it off, but it was 50 years since these birds had abducted a little child in the area. The *IPN* cleared the first page and published two thrilling illustrations of the eagle snatching the child away, and the terrible discovery on the crags. But after the coroner's inquest pooh-poohed the idea of an eagle playing any part in

the child's abduction, the newspapers lost interest. In 1921, there was again publicity when a child's skeleton was found near Aberdeen; there was speculation that it was a 22-month-old child that had disappeared from a croft back in 1914. 'Taken by Eagle?' asked the *Daily Express*, but when there was an inquiry in the Aberdeen Sheriff's Court, several witnesses declared that they had never seen an eagle in the district, and that it would have been possible for a child of that age to have climbed the hillside to reach the spot where the skeleton was found.

After these two Scottish cases of alleged eagle abductions had been discounted, the serious UK press would have nothing more to do with avian abductions, but the tabloid papers, both in Britain and the United States, kept faith with the marauding eagles, although their stories often came from 'Our Foreign Correspondent' in some faraway land. Around this time, ornithologists also parted company with the idea of avian

abductions for good, since experimental research in the 1920s seemed to show that the maximum lifting capacity of a golden eagle was around 6-7lb (2.7-3kg). This would mean that if a newborn infant were put on the bird table, it would be in immediate danger of being taken by an eagle, while older children would be safe. This finding led to the old stories of grown children being snatched by eagles being dismissed as old wives' tales. Ignored by biologists and fast becoming a 'damned' area of research, the yarns of child-snatching birds of prey found friends among the lovers of zoological

anomalies, who reasoned that if ordinary eagles were incapable of lifting a child, this was clearly evidence of the existence of 'thunderbirds' with a wingspan similar to that of a small aeroplane.

It was only in Norway that the stubborn country people did not listen to the zoologists: they remained convinced that eagles carried off children at regular intervals. When children disappeared, the eagle was often the first suspect. In 1932, the girl Svanhild Hansen, a native of the outback Norwegian island of Leka, went missing from her home. She was found on a cliff quite

some distance away, and claimed to have been abducted by a large eagle. Although she was well-nigh unhurt by her adventure, and although she weighed in excess of 38lb (17kg), Svanhild the 'Eagle Girl' remained a minor Norwegian celebrity until her death in 2010 (see FT272:24-25 for her obituary). The people of Leka were very proud of her, particularly those working in the tourism industry: the eagle kidnap story remains the region's sole claim to fame, and the district coat of arms is adorned with a golden eagle's claw.

There are around 80 newspaper reports





ENFANT ENLEVÉ PAR UN AIGLE

of children being carried off, or an abduction attempted, by an eagle (or in a few instances a vulture). Around half of these are likely to be newspaper canards, and many of the others are misinterpretations of actual happenings. Even the verified finding of a child's remains or clothes in an eyrie is not conclusive proof that the child was abducted and killed by the bird, since eagles are carrion eaters. In Norway, the eagle was the paedophile child abductor's greatest friend. Since it is the nature of the eagle to strike hard at its victim with its formidable talons and peck at its eyes with its beak, all stories where the abduction victim escapes unharmed or only with scratches must be untrue.

The aforementioned weight-lifting experiments for golden eagles have important flaws, and these birds have more than once been recorded lifting jackrabbits, hares (6-7lb/2.7-3kg in weight) and even foxes (8-12lb/3.6-5.4kg). Cats and small dogs have also been preyed upon. There are no reliable instances of heavier prey being abducted, however, and this would indicate that all reports of children heavier than 12-14lb (5.4-6.4kg) being abducted by eagles are false.

Eagle behaviour is likely to have changed considerably over time, as a result of natural selection and intense hunting and persecution: shy and wary individuals survived, bold and aggressive ones perished. There might well be some degree of truth in the best-verified 19th-century US reports of children being attacked by eagles. There are a few true cases of attacks on human beings by eagles affected by 'hunger frenzy', and there are also likely to be a few genuine cases of small infants abducted and killed by eagles.

Like the terror of being buried alive, the fear of having a child abducted by an eagle is a primal one and has a perpetual fascination. That it still lies dormant in present-day people is demonstrated by the considerable interest shown in a recent YouTube video of an attempted eagle abduction of a small child; it turned out to be a hoax. 

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to FT and the author of numerous books, including *Queen Victoria's Stalker* (2010), and *Murder Houses of London* (2014).

Jan Bondeson's collection of stories from the *Illustrated Police News*, *Strange Victoriana*, is now available from Amberley Publishing, priced £20. ([www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com))



FACING PAGE: A baby is abducted by a cradle-snatching eagle in the village of Ilonse, near Nice; from the *Supplément Littéraire Illustré* of *Le Petit Parisien*, 25 Jan 1914. ABOVE: The remains of a child are found in an eagle's nest, from the IPN, 2 April 1910.



# WAR AND PEACE (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

In the second part of his investigation into Vladimir Putin's new, virtual-reality empire, **SD TUCKER** uncovers stranger-than-fiction plans afoot in Ukraine involving cosmic calculators, Little Green Men, the Dark Lord of the Sith and state-funded kangaroo massacres.

**A**sk the average person what's happening in Ukraine right now, and they will stop, think and then ask: "Er ... is there a war on?" Such a response should not be derided as ignorant. Instead, such uncertainty should be viewed as the deliberate creation of the Kremlin. Last time, we saw how President Vladimir Putin, with the help of his chief spin-doctor Vladislav Surkov, had created a kind of avant-garde pseudo-democracy in Russia itself, with fake opposition parties and outbreaks of alarmist media hysteria about false foreign foes like Pokémon being orchestrated to confuse and neuter resistance. Now we shall see how, in Ukraine, the dastardly duo have subsequently engineered what may well be the world's first-ever full-blown outbreak of post-modern warfare.

**REALITY IS A STATE OF MIND**  
Putin and Surkov's latest recruit in their quest to declare war upon reality itself appears to be an Estonian gentleman named Anton Vaino, Putin's newly-appointed Chief of Staff, who set off quite a furore online following his selection for the role this August. The fuss centred on a 2012 article, apparently penned by Vaino, which had appeared in the obscure journal *Economics and Law*. Entitled "The Capitalisation of the Future" and purporting to lay out new methods of governing complex, modern media-saturated societies, it was much mocked as being an impenetrable stew of metaphysics, pseudoscience and turgid management-speak which seemed to mean nothing tangible at all. If you could

decipher it, though, the essay appeared to contain a verbal and diagrammatic blueprint enabling Russia to conquer the space-time continuum itself, via the use of a novel device Vaino claimed to have patented called the 'nooscope'. Allegedly, this nooscope, billed as "consisting of a network of space-scanners", could tap into the collective unconscious of humanity, allowing it to instantly register changes in global reality, or, as Vaino put it, "record changes in the noosphere", thus "making the invisible visible".<sup>1</sup>

But what *was* it, in actuality? Did it even exist? Those who recall the logic of Putin's imaginary nuclear-torpedo from last issue may have already anticipated that the answer is both yes *and* no simultaneously. Vaino's ideas become comprehensible only in light of a long-standing quasi-mystical, quasi-scientific and (supposedly) utopian domestic school of thought known as 'Russian Cosmism'. One of the most celebrated Cosmists was Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), a scientist whose pet theory was that of the noosphere – the same realm Anton Vaino now wishes to penetrate with his nooscope. Regarded as equal to Newton and Darwin by some Russians, his basic idea was that, as intelligent life spread across the planet, the Earth as a biosphere (a source and host of life) was rapidly transforming into Earth as a noosphere (a realm both hosting and infused with intellect, from the Greek word *nous*, for 'mind'). All human knowledge,

Vernadsky said, was really "noospheric matter", with the Earth becoming host to a sheath of pure mind-stuff that could be tapped into by others, an idea sometimes compared to Jung's collective unconscious or Theosophy's Akashic Records.<sup>2</sup>

If noosphere, Akashic Records and collective unconscious are all analogous, then another thing they correspond to today is the intangible yet very real world of the Internet

and mass media. Vaino's nooscope probably represents a desire for decoding and manipulating this realm, and thence physical reality itself. More and more, Vernadsky's key idea of matter being imbued with mind is coming true. One of Vaino's most cited sentences reads: "The sensory network of the nooscope, beginning from new-generation bank-cards and finishing with 'smart-dust', straightforwardly identifies Co-Being in time and space." Here, we can see the process of matter becoming infused with noosphere in action. A debit-card, containing a chip-based memory of your purchases, is already more 'psychic', or noospheric, than an untraceable bank-note; it identifies the "Co-Being" of your financial transactions "in time and space" very nicely indeed. The 'smart-dust' Vaino speaks of represents the logical extrapolation of this trend, with the 'mental' history of every particle of matter in existence one day potentially being able to be read by advanced super-computers.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in an online world, his ambition of "recording changes in the noosphere" is to some extent possible. Algorithms deducing what is currently 'trending' on Twitter perform just this job, standing as an early step towards the mind-reading of the collective populace; equally, artificially influencing what trends could be seen as an early form of collective mind control. Just as useful to the Kremlin would be the ability to manipulate physical reality by exploiting such smart technology. The BBC tracked down one of Vaino's co-authors on the 2012 article, who said that the nooscope was designed to be an 'Internet of Things'-type device, working through analysis of Big Data. If the web really is going to be integrated into all our everyday devices and environments, as is currently promised/threatened by tech-gurus, then it follows that manipulation of the noosphere will, *de facto*, result in manipulation of material reality as well. The prospects for malicious actors in such a world are significant – especially for a sophisticated avant-garde demiurge like Vladislav Surkov...



LEFT: Putin's new Chief of Staff, Anton Vaino.

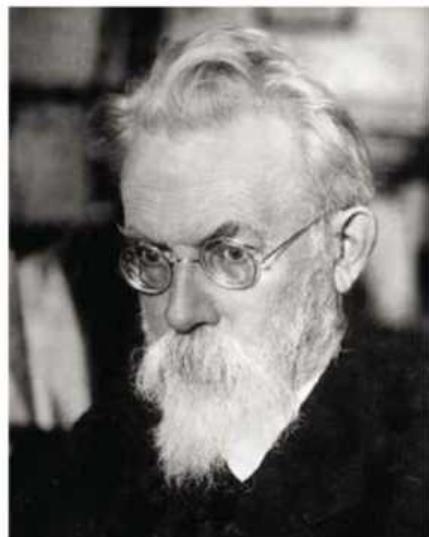
## PUSSY RIOT

When I consider the recent Russian destabilisation of Ukraine, I tend to laugh. This is not because I find the death and destruction amusing, but because the first things I tend to think of are kangaroos, Darth Vader and lesbians. While I cannot 100% prove it – the Kremlin is big on the concept of ‘deniability’ these days – I think this may be because men like Surkov are using the conflict as a giant testing-ground for the military conquest of other nations’ noospheres, in a new programme of quasi-physical propaganda wars without limit. The basic chronology of the conflict in Ukraine is as follows. In November 2013, Ukraine’s Russophile President Victor Yanukovich suspended various measures intended to prepare his country for a possible future life within the EU, which led to mass protests in the Brussels-leaning west of the country, in particular in Kiev’s Maidan Square. Unrest continued until February 2014, when Yanukovich was ousted in a revolutionary uprising. Putin, unhappy with having his sphere of influence eroded, and facing falling popularity domestically, began a programme of covert warfare in Crimea, culminating in that March’s annexation of the area. Meanwhile, the Kremlin was also busily encouraging revolt in the pro-Russian east of Ukraine, leading to the declaration of two independent ‘People’s Republics’ in the Donbass region, something which has resulted in an uneasy state of on-off civil war between Kiev and Donbass ever since. The pretence was that these were wholly organic uprisings, perpetrated by the pro-Russian folk of the region. In reality, however, many of the Ukrainian ‘patriots’ doing the fighting were masked Russian special-forces troops, shorn of their usual uniforms and identifying insignia. As they dressed in green, they became known as ‘Little Green Men’: the point being that evidence for the existence of such alien beings is profoundly ambiguous. Russia tried to claim the troops were just pro-Russian locals who had got their equipment from the domestic equivalent of Army & Navy Stores, but seeing as they had machineguns, artillery and helicopters, this seemed somewhat unlikely. Nonetheless, Russia maintained the charade, with Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu memorably channelling the spirit of Donald Rumsfeld to the effect that “I can only say one thing – it’s hard to search for a black cat in a dark room, especially if it’s not there.”<sup>4</sup>

Putin’s regime used their control of the web and TV to continue trying to make black seem like white; when you have full power over the national media noosphere, you can simply try and mould reality to your own liking regardless. For example, in 2015, Russia’s media watchdog made a legal ruling, presumably upon official ‘medical’ advice, that hearing criticism of Vladimir Putin was harmful to children’s health and thus ought not to be allowed, leading to the



## THE NOOSCOPE REPRESENTS A DESIRE FOR DECODING AND MANIPULATING REALITY



banning of an online film which dubbed Putin’s Ukraine-invading cronies “crooks and thieves”. Following the shooting down of the Malaysian Airways passenger flight MH17 in 2014 by Russian-backed rebels in Donbass, meanwhile, Russia’s main TV channel broadcast ‘leaked’ images, apparently showing a Ukrainian fighter-jet firing a missile at the doomed plane. Aviation experts could tell they were fake, but what about

ABOVE: Ukrainian nationalist Iryna Farion, allegedly “prone to heavy breathing around men in uniform”. BELOW: Russian Cosmist Vladimir Vernadsky, who theorised that Earth was becoming a ‘noosphere’.

ordinary Russians?<sup>5</sup> Even more blatantly biased was an unintentionally amusing 2014 ‘documentary’, *The Furies of Maidan*, broadcast on Russian TV following the pro-EU protests in Maidan Square, which tried to claim that the entire Ukrainian uprising was the work of raving lesbians in a “uterine frenzy” who found the idea of fighting Vlad to be sexually arousing. As a voice-over said in an ad for the show: “They like it hard. They are turned on by danger. And woe to anyone who fails to appreciate them!” A friendly psychiatrist named Dr Poleyev was wheeled on to say that interest in politics, whilst perfectly natural in males, was a sign of outright perversion in women, being built around “some sort of sexual pathology”. One prominent female activist involved in Maidan, for example, was Iryna Farion, a Ukrainian ultra-nationalist. Suspiciously, Farion had “long been prone to heavy breathing around men in uniform”, said the narrator, and ever since her divorce some years ago had turned into a “mad fury” desperate to unleash her sexual frustration onto the world in the form of martial ultra-violence. Footage was shown of concerned Russian women wrapping up free dildos in order to cure Farion of her madness, but even if these gifts worked, Dr Poleyev also ‘proved’ that the pro-Maidan US official Victoria Nuland was a lesbian on account of her “mannish voice” and “broad shoulders”, so there was no real hope of peace in the region anyway. The film’s basic argument was that a cabal of evil sapphists wanted Ukraine to join the EU, with its gay-friendly ways, in order to turn the whole country “deviant”, and had recklessly fostered revolt to make their rainbow dream come true.<sup>6</sup>



# STRANGE STATESMEN #15

## USE THE FARCE, VLADISLAV!

What you have to remember is that Vladimir Putin doesn't believe that Ukraine even exists. In 2008, he said the following to George W Bush: "You don't understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? ... The greater part of it is a gift from us." With this in mind, Putin has begun transforming the east of the country into a different fictional land more to his own tastes, called 'Novorossiya', or 'New Russia'.<sup>7</sup> In November 2014, hoping to give credibility to his newly-created domains in Donbass, Putin authorised rigged local elections to take place there, most notably in the coal-mining city of Donetsk, the location of the most significant invented mini-state. The end result of this process was the weirdly post-modern sight of a fake country with fake politicians chasing fake votes in a fake election by espousing fake policies; perhaps it is no coincidence that Vladislav Surkov had just returned to Putin's immediate retinue in the lead-up to the Ukrainian conflict. The 2014 election-campaign of Putin's chosen pro-Russian puppet in Donetsk, an electrician-cum-warlord called Aleksandr Zakharchenko, was particularly absurd. Aided by the fact that his main 'challenger' was a martial-arts instructor who didn't bother campaigning because he agreed with everything his opponent said, Zakharchenko was free to proclaim as his signature policy the aim of increasing pensions so that Donetsk's elderly would soon be able to "travel to Australia at least once a year to shoot a dozen kangaroos on safari." He admitted that creating this kangaroo-killing Novorossiyan utopia was "an insane goal", but nonetheless won the brand-new office of Donetsk's PM with 78.93% of the vote; little wonder, seeing as the election was condemned as a "farce at gunpoint" by the real government in Kiev. Appropriately enough, Zakharchenko's inauguration took place in a theatre.<sup>8</sup>

Even odder, there is now an outbreak



of actual fictional characters standing for office across Ukraine, in the shape of Darth 'Mikhailovich' Vader, and various other *Star Wars* cast-members; Emperor 'Dmitry' Palpatine even managed to win a seat on Odessa's city-council. What is going on here is exceedingly unclear. There may be as many as 15 separate Vaders at work, although the most famous, who has given interviews telling of his love for embroidery and golden-retrievers, stands on behalf of the Internet Party of Ukraine, an outfit with allegedly shady origins which aims to "computerise the entire country", thus transforming it into pure noosphere. Some view this *Star Wars* fad as harmless fun, or a jokey way of protesting against political corruption, but for others the situation is more sinister. Is Russia deliberately flooding the ballot with Vaders in a bid to undermine democracy and mock Ukraine's condemnation of its own ballots in Donbass as illegitimate? A disturbing online blog by accredited outside electoral observer Erik Herron provides compelling evidence that Lord Vader may well have been involved in an act of electoral fraud that worked to the advantage of Putin during the 2015 elections for Odessa's mayor. Herron's theory is that the media-friendly *Star Wars* antics are just a ruse, designed to accumulate Facebook 'likes' and thereby draw eyes away from what is really going on in Odessa, an eastern port viewed by some as a highly desirable future addition to Novorossiya. Even the Ukrainian government's attempts to win a quick propaganda victory by ordering the destruction of all old Lenin statues across the country as a "destabilising factor"



TOP: Chewbacca is arrested at a political rally in Odessa. CENTRE: Alexander Zakharchenko, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. ABOVE: Darth Vader on the campaign trail in Kiev.



DENIS KORNILOV

have been undermined by Vader. Russia's Foreign Ministry derided Kiev's command as demonstrating a "perverse idea of good and evil", whereupon a new figure popped up on a plinth in Odessa, to replace Lenin... namely, the Dark Lord of the Sith himself. The implied message? Get rid of one Evil Empire and another will be along shortly.<sup>9</sup>

## THE RAIN OF PAIN FALLS MAINLY ON UKRAINE

This post-modern weirdness has all the hallmarks of the work of Vladislav Surkov, a noted author of fiction; the very ridiculousness of the whole notion of a Vader-backed insurgency renders it highly deniable. The weirdest instance of fact mingling with fiction in Ukraine, however, comes in the shape of Donetsk's Deputy Defence Minister for a period in 2014, Fyodor Berezin. Berezin is an award-winning Ukrainian sci-fi novelist of highly nationalistic bent, who seems to believe his country is currently under assault from an unholy alliance of Yankee devils,

neo-fascists and Euro-gays. He also appears to think that 'reality' is actually a complex simulation created by "a black calculator" with the ability to "count the entire universe" which is lurking inside a black hole somewhere. Prior to the war in Ukraine breaking out, there was a whole flood of books set in the country during some imaginary future conflict between Russia and NATO, which became such a publishing sensation that the Ukrainian politician (and one-time Berezin super-fan) Arsen Avakov went public with his theory that Russia was deliberately facilitating the production of such populist pulp to stir up appetite for war. If so, then Berezin, author of titles like *War 2010: The Ukrainian Front* must have been the Kremlin's favourite author. Once the Ukrainian conflict broke out for real, former anti-aircraft gunner Berezin quickly joined up to live out his own storylines and save his nation from the massing forces of "gaymocracy". Within a month, the then rebel leader Igor Strelkov had appointed him Deputy Defence

**LEFT:** Fyodor Berezin, sci-fi novelist, and for a while Donetsk's Deputy Defence Minister, is protected from the forces of gayness by "mystical" powers.

Minister on the genuinely childish grounds that: "Considering that [I am] a historian and battle re-enactor, it boggles the mind to think what we can do with a sci-fi writer who is [also] an anti-aircraft defence-minister to boot!" Delighted, Berezin posted a status-update online which began with the words "I have found myself in an alternate reality"; and it seemed so. Whilst fighting Putin's good fight, Berezin began developing a deluded fantasy about being protected from the forces of gayness by "mystical" powers; one time, he says he was shot at by homo-fascists armed with machine-guns, but their bullets "disappeared before they got to me". He believes this is because we all live inside a "cosmic matrix", or giant computer-program, which sometimes suffers "a glitch... Matrix-error, we might say" for special persons such as himself, who are also masters of the art of creating imaginary worlds.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps Berezin's illusions are understandable. Many of his books are set in an alternate-reality where the USSR never collapsed, and the hammer and sickle flies over Western capitals like 'gay Paree'. Putin would also like to live in such a world. Surkov is the one entrusted with making it so. His 2014 sci-fi story *Without Sky*, set in the aftermath of a Fifth World War, gives us an insight into how this might be achieved. Mocking the "primitive wars" of the 19th and 20th centuries, in which two sides fought one another with clear objectives, Surkov speaks of a new kind of "non-linear" warfare in which the actual physical fighting is merely "part of a process. Not necessarily its most important part."<sup>11</sup> This, then, is warfare as the Kremlin now conceives it, with no clear beginning, end or limits, a war of mind, myth and media as much as of the body – a war of the noosphere. FT

### NOTES

**1** [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37109169](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37109169); [www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-very-strange-writings-of-putins-new-chief-of-staff](http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-very-strange-writings-of-putins-new-chief-of-staff); <http://ocularusa.com/8235-putins-new-chief-of-staffclaimsheinventedthe-nooscope.html>; all subsequent quotes re: Vaino are taken from these.

**2** George M Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp155-162

**3** This is similar to the dream of the Cosmist Fedorov, who wished to achieve control over every last atom in the Universe before resurrecting the dead by stitching together the 'ancestral dust' their bodies had since decayed into.

**4** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

[Little\\_green\\_men\\_\(Ukrainian\\_crisis\)](#)

**5** *Times*, 18 Aug 2015; *Daily Mail*, 17 November 2014

**6** [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/25/want-a-good-look-at-putin-s-pervy-propaganda-see-the-furies-of-maidan.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/25/want-a-good-look-at-putin-s-pervy-propaganda-see-the-furies-of-maidan.html); Victoria Nuland, incidentally, is actually happily married – to a man, and everything!

**7** [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/11588182/Fifteen-years-of-Vladimir-Putin-in-quotes.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/11588182/Fifteen-years-of-Vladimir-Putin-in-quotes.html). Putin didn't actually invent the concept of Novorossiya, but helped resurrect it from obscurity.

**8** *Sunday Times*, 2 Nov 2014; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donbass\\_general\\_elections,\\_2014](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donbass_general_elections,_2014); [https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Alexander\\_Zakharchenko](https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Alexander_Zakharchenko); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

[world-latin-america-27211501](#); <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-zakharchenko-idUKKBNOLE1DZ20150210>

**9** [www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/30/yes-darth-vader-ran-for-office-in-ukraine-unfortunately-its-no-joke/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/30/yes-darth-vader-ran-for-office-in-ukraine-unfortunately-its-no-joke/); [www.reuters.com/article/us-film-starwars-widerimage-darth-idUSKBNOTU16120151211](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-film-starwars-widerimage-darth-idUSKBNOTU16120151211); [www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/34638109/darth-vader-supporter-chewbacca-arrested-in-ukraine](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/34638109/darth-vader-supporter-chewbacca-arrested-in-ukraine); [www.inverse.com/article/8079-understanding-ukraine-s-internet-party-politics-through-star-wars](http://www.inverse.com/article/8079-understanding-ukraine-s-internet-party-politics-through-star-wars); [www.interpretermag.com/who-are-ukraines-darth-vaders-the-masks-are-off/](http://www.interpretermag.com/who-are-ukraines-darth-vaders-the-masks-are-off/); [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32267075](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32267075); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_Party\\_of\\_Ukraine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Party_of_Ukraine)

**10** [www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-russian-tom-clancy-is-on-the-front-lines-for-real](http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-russian-tom-clancy-is-on-the-front-lines-for-real); [www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2014/07/science\\_fiction\\_writers\\_predicted\\_ukraine\\_conflict\\_now\\_they\\_re\\_fighting.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/07/science_fiction_writers_predicted_ukraine_conflict_now_they_re_fighting.html); *Sunday Times*, 24 Aug 2014. According to Berezin, the Matrix is even responsible for making him lose his pen, only for it to later turn up behind his ear. Interestingly, his novel *The Black Ship* features an advanced nuclear-torpedo of just the type Russia now claims to have built in actuality; maybe this is where the Kremlin got the idea for their (hopefully) imaginary weapon from?

**11** [www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2014/03/28/peter-pomerantsev/non-linear-war/](http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2014/03/28/peter-pomerantsev/non-linear-war/)

THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

# BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

## 15. PLUMBING THE DEPTHS

On 16 September this year, the *Scotsman* published a photograph of the Loch Ness Monster (hereafter 'Nessie'), taken on 10 September by Ian Bremner, 58, a whisky warehouse worker, and reproduced below. The paper commented that this "could be one of the most convincing Loch Ness Monster sightings to date", and reckoned that the creature was a couple of metres long. The picture is certainly a far cry from the blurry affairs of dubious provenance and doubtful veracity that make up the bulk of Nessie portraits. But therein may lie its downfall. Enlarge the photo, and the head bears a strange resemblance to a seal's. Which makes it quite likely (and look at the way the water splashes) that the two 'humps' are two more seals cavorting along behind it. This, said the *Scotsman*, is what some of Mr Bremner's friends think – as have commentators online. His reaction to the sceptics is interesting: "I suppose it could be seals – but I'm not so sure. The more I think about it, the more I think it could be Nessie." As we shall see, he could be right both ways. Mr Bremner's picture and his comments make a fine illustration of Gareth Williams's implicit thesis in *A Monstrous Commotion*, his history-cum-summary of the Nessie phenomenon, and this month's essential volume for the fortean library.

threat from the busily re-arming Germany of the new-minted Third Reich. The birth of the 'monster' and its attendant to-do did not exactly constitute escapism, but were certainly a welcome distraction from the grimness and uncertainty of the era. Throughout his recounting of the Nessie saga, Williams takes care to remind the reader of the social and political background and its shifts down the decades.

We do, of course, get the standard history: beginning with St Columba exercising some muscular Christianity in AD 565 in defence of one Lugne Mocumin, who was about to be attacked by a great beast while swimming across the River Ness (*not* the Loch) to fetch a boat; the saint's command caused the creature to back off "as if dragged away by ropes". The miracle, if that was what it was, impressed the fearsome local King Brude whose heathen ways Columba was after changing, and who ere long was converted to Christ. One has to bear in mind that this account was originally written a century later; and that most Scottish (and Irish) lakes, no matter how weeny, were and are reputedly infested by a hostile beast of some kind. Scotland's favourite was the kelpie, or *each uisge* (water horse), which while usually playful would make off with anyone daft enough to try to ride it. Williams reckons these tales of unpredictable water spirits acted as a useful health-and-safety device to keep children away from the water, whose depths in Loch Ness's case can plunge hundreds of feet within a few paces of the shoreline. The point one takes away is that the pagan Brude and his subjects would scarcely have been unaware of the kelpie, and so all the more impressed by Columba's giving one a holy bum's rush. The kelpie tradition also created an 'authorised myth' of there being something strange swimming about in Ness's impenetrable waters. That magical tradition was also still strong in the 1930s, and researchers reported that local people often refused to speak of anything strange seen in the Loch.

And speaking of beasts: the Great Beast himself, Aleister Crowley, lived on the eastern side of the Loch for 15 years, on and off, from 1899, and once complained

IAN BREMNER / SWNS.COM



Ian Bremner is clearly aware of the pitfalls of thinking you've seen (let alone photographed) Nessie. He was also quoted as saying: "It's a part of the world that always makes you second guess what you're seeing," and that "You start seeing things even when you know fine there's nothing there." Nessie, in short, may be in part a function (not necessarily a product) of the imagination as it works on and with common knowledge – an amalgam one might reasonably call, in this instance, the *mythic* imagination. Williams, a professor emeritus of medicine, doesn't make a fuss about taking this view, which comes across quite subtly, as he concentrates as much if not more on the investigators and Loch-watchers as he does on the arguments about Nessie herself.

As befits a research scientist who's also written histories of diabetes and polio, Williams has done his research

meticulously. Thus we discover much about the history of Nessie that doesn't appear in the standard accounts or, come to that, anywhere else. And, as is never unexpected in fringe fields, there is much hilarity and the occasional hair-raising moment to be had from the feuds continually breaking out among rival researchers. Williams also recognises that the story of Nessie and her pursuers has not taken place in a Highland vacuum. Apart from the effects of the Loch being long, deep, very murky, and sporting a reputation for never giving up its dead, he records the social and political context of events around and beyond it. This is particularly relevant to the start of the Nessie story, which occurred during 1933: the Depression was still in full swing in this part of Scotland: unemployment stood at six per cent, and tourism (shooters and anglers mostly) was at a painful ebb. Meanwhile no one could miss the growing

to the local Vigilance Society that the area lacked ladies of the night. For whatever original mischievous reason, he put up signs around his property warning of the ‘Koloo Mavlick’ within, albeit with the reassurance that it did not bite. The signs kept people off his land all right, and they might have made a wider detour had they known that ‘Koloo Mavlick’ was his pet name for his own gentleman’s appendage. (Weird or what? One is reminded of the late Prof. Arthur Ellison: “I call mine ‘George’” – although he was referring to his subconscious.) In due course Crowley would claim that it was he who had invented Nessie by this means, although the real kerfuffle didn’t start until two decades after he had left the Loch.

The standard chronologies maintain that over the centuries Nessie has been seen by various people; actually the next sighting after the Columba incident was in the 1730s, with a few more in the 1800s but, as Williams points out in due course, none of these have contemporary records and come to us second-hand. In July 1852, the *Inverness Courier* reported on a neat lexilinked irony of a ‘monster’ scare. Two “large bodies” were seen swimming across the Loch from Aldourie toward Lochend. “A reception party gathered,” recounts Williams, “with pitchforks, scythes and an ancient rifle, and variously identified the creatures as a sea serpent, or a pair of whales, seals or deer. As they approached, a ‘venerable patriarch’ took aim with his rifle, then threw the gun down because only fools shot at kelpies. When the animals finally emerged, they turned out to be just ponies...” Water horses, indeed.

The Nessie we know today made her first appearance in the *Inverness Courier* of 2 May 1933. An unnamed correspondent reported that a “well-known local businessman” and his wife, “a University graduate” – in other words a pair of those pillars of society whose very respectability precludes aspersions of exaggeration, misapprehensions or fibs, and are at once inducted into the vast regiment of unimpeachable ‘reliable witnesses’ – had recently seen an “uncanny” creature “resembling... a whale... many feet long” in the Loch. It “disported itself” so that the water was “cascading and churning like a simmering cauldron”, but soon disappeared “in a boiling mass of foam”. The correspondent reminded his readers that “for generations” the Loch “had been credited with being the home of a fearsome-looking monster.” It sometimes happens that the disparagement of sceptics backfires, drawing more than warranted attention to some dubious claim. This may have happened when, 10 days later, the *Courier* printed a long

## “A MIND NEEDS BOOKS AS A SWORD NEEDS A WHETSTONE, IF IT IS TO KEEP ITS EDGE.”

*George RR Martin*

letter from Captain John Macdonald of the steamer *Gondolier* stating that in 20,000 voyages over 50 years on the Loch, he had never seen a ‘monster’ (though he had seen shoals of salmon making a “tremendous upheaval” in the water) and furthermore had never before even heard that the Loch was haven to a monster – kelpies hardly qualifying, we assume.

The letter inspired others to come up with their own explanations and, after a couple more reports of ‘monstrous’ sightings from the *Courier*’s correspondent, inspired droves more to arrive in hope of spotting the creature. Summer 1933

saw Loch Ness tourism thoroughly back in business. It was not until the end of the year that it was revealed that the irreproachable couple making the initial report in April or May (their memory of the exact date tended to fluctuate) were John and Aldie Mackay, coincidentally the owners of the lochside Drumnadrochit Hotel. Gareth Williams is too much the gentleman to state the cynical conclusion.

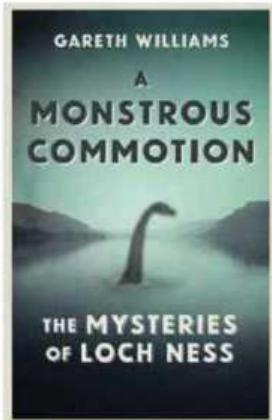
Next on the witness roster were Mr and Mrs George Spicer, heading home for Golders Green on 22 July. They saw a creature with a long neck, 6–8ft (1.8–2.4m) long “and very ugly”, crossing the road in front of them. Mr Spicer was adamant that it wasn’t an otter, as had been suggested, and “whatever it is... it should be destroyed”, which seems a little unfair, apart from its raising conservation strategy issues in an ongoing elusive-monster situation. Williams doesn’t mention Alexander T Lovcanski’s careful deconstruction of this sighting into a mirage of *an otter* ([www.skeptic.org.uk/magazine/onlinearticles/monster-or-mirage/](http://www.skeptic.org.uk/magazine/onlinearticles/monster-or-mirage/)), although he does discuss the Loch’s propensity to create mirages later in the book. Early August saw three more reports in as many days, and “another rash of sightings” in September. All this led the *Courier* to run an editorial endorsing the

reality of the monster, along the familiar lines that so many witnesses couldn’t all be wrong or all liars, with the result that the Loch’s already booming tourist season extended well into autumn. This in turn led the *Scotsman* to send an ace reporter to the Loch, and his reports, published at the end of October, caught the attention of Fleet Street. Nessie, now national news, finally made her first photographic appearance in early December in Glasgow’s *Daily Record* and the London *Daily Sketch*. Taken by Hugh Gray, it was deemed genuine by ‘experts’, although the typically blurry image seems to show nothing more spectacular than a Labrador with a large stick in its mouth.

Thus, in eight months, Nessie transmogrified from rumour to reality, and ‘the rest is history’. It seemed right to give the bulk of this recommendation over to these first few months, as they show so clearly how Nessie has *always* been an interactive phenomenon, a broth whose ingredients are constantly in play and affecting all the others. It’s the people involved – rather than Nessie herself, who remains enigmatic – that take centre stage in the ensuing history. And, as Gareth Williams tells it in his thorough and thoroughly un-mocking way, what a history it is. There are the endless speculations about the true nature of the beast and what it could possibly live on (not much). There are the submersibles, sonar surveys, loch-watches and proposed lures to capture the thing (one involved trawling the water with six bullocks for bait, while a warship waited to finish it off: leaving, one fears, little for a useful post-mortem). And there are all those questionable photographs, ranging from the irrepressible Doc Shiels’s and Frank Searle’s shameless fakes to probably honest and optimistic mistakes. Hardly anyone who has engaged in researching Nessie has been entirely pure in motivation or practice, Sir Peter Scott and Adrian Shine standing out as exceptions. The aforementioned Searle was notorious for his hostility to fellow researchers, beating up at least one and once threatening to disembowel Shine with a knife; yet he seems to have charmed the pants off innumerable young women, despite being no Adonis. As for Nessie herself, the evidence suggests that objectively ‘the monster’ is not one thing but many, each detection interpreted according to context and predilection. Or as Williams sums it up: “The Loch Ness Monster that thousands of people have seen, photographed, filmed and echo sounded is not a single entity, but a rag-bag stuffed with non-monstrous animals, tricks of nature and hoaxes.”

Naturally, this will deter no one who travels the lochside from keeping a sharp eye open and a finger on the camera button. 

Gareth Williams, *A Monstrous Commotion: The Mysteries of Loch Ness*, Orion Books, 2015.



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# forum



## Any teleport in a storm

BARRY BALDWIN examines some antecedents of Charles Fort's coinage of the word 'teleportation'



**BARRY BALDWIN** is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Emeritus Professor of Classics at the University of Calgary. He is a regular columnist for FT.

**A**s Jane Austen didn't quite say: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that Charles Fort invented the word 'teleportation' in 1931."

Fort's Wikipedia entry says it is uncertain if he was aware of earlier uses of the verb 'teleport'. Two newspaper reports use this verb to describe an experiment in Bombay in 1878, using some electrically charged contraption to transport a boy and a dog. The two's bodily constituents got muddled up, creating a horrid hybrid, thus prefiguring the 1958 film *The Fly*. References (both online): *The Capricornian* (Australia), 29 June 1878, p14; *Hawaiian Gazette*, 23 Oct 1878. Fort was familiar with the *Bombay Gazette*, quoting (*Books*, p776) for an event on 19 February 1872.

A year before the Bombay experiment, Edward Page Mitchell published in the *Sun* (New York, 25 Mar 1877) his short story, 'The Man Without A Body', about a pre-*Star Trek* "Beam Me Up, Scotty" device, dubbing it a 'Telepomp' – a Greek-derived neologism, unlike Fort's Graeco-Latin hybrid. Mitchell also hit on a similar titular term, 'Tachypomp' (= 'Quick-Send').

Mitchell's wheeze was imitated by Arthur Conan Doyle in his short story 'The Disintegration Machine', published two years before Fort's coinage in *The Strand*, January 1929 – no 'tele-' terms were employed. Writing (*Books*, p879) about a case of horse mutilation – shades of *Equus* – Fort made use of Doyle's account in the Newnes 1920s partwork *Great Stories of Real Life*, remarking that: "Because of Doyle's disclosures – so it is said – or because of the publicity," the Government appointed an



### Apollonius vanished from an audience with Domitian

investigating committee which concluded Edalji was innocent.

Doyle published an article on the Edalji case in the *Daily Telegraph* (11-12 Jan 1907), reprinted with an addendum in the *New York Times* (2-3 Feb 1907) – reproduced online. For more, see 'The Edalji case – again!' by Mr X [1977:

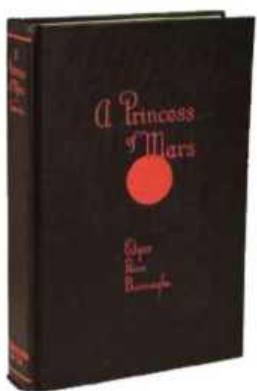
FT21:8-9]; D Michael Risinger, 'Boxes in Boxes: Julian Barnes, Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and the Edalji Case', *International Commentary on Evidence* 4 (2006), article 3 (online), also Gordon Weaver, *Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case* (2006). Like Wikipedia, I cannot say if, or at all, Fort was influenced in his choice of terms by any of the above – thoughts from fortean scholars

and FT readers in general would be most welcome.

Tail-piece: Gordon Rennie and Frazer Irving developed a yarn first adumbrated in 1991, containing such episodes as Fort swatting zombies with a cricket bat, into *Necronauts* (from the Greek terms for 'Corpse' or 'Dead' and 'Sailor'), published (13 Dec 2000 – 21 Feb 2001) in the British comics anthology *2000AD Prog* 2001.#1223-1230. Its cast comprised Fort, Conan Doyle, Harry Houdini, HP Lovecraft, and an anonymous evil flyer, modelled on Charles Lindberg, presumably because of his pro-Nazi sympathies.

Regardless of the semantic point, it may be that some – not all – of Fort's 'teleportation' notions were influenced by the likes of Mitchell and Doyle. One could take this to further fields, ancient and modern. For easy instances, Plato's 'Myth of Er' (*Republic*, bk.10 chs.614-21) has the hero's body mysteriously returned to his funeral pyre after his visit to the underworld with the souls of the departed. Apollonius of Tyana [FT309:17], often dubbed 'The Pagan Christ', suddenly vanished from an audience with Roman emperor Domitian. More pertinently, perhaps, is the unexplained instantaneous transference from Earth to Mars in Edgar Rice Burroughs's *A Princess of Mars* (1912), the first of his Barsoom novels; he uses the same device in his other sci-fi series. This same year saw the publication of *The Financier* by Fort's friend, Theodore Dreiser. Beginning with his short story, 'A Radical Corpuscule' (1906, published in 1976 by Sam Moscovitch – available online), then his unfinished *X* (1915), Fort was increasingly preoccupied with Mars, as evinced by the massive number of entries in Schlanger's Index. Was Fort influenced by either his "thrice-accursed Greeks" and/or by the contemporary Burroughs in developing his teleportative theories? I hope Fort's more experienced biographers will come on this...

"Some other time I may be able more clearly to think out an expression upon flows of pigeons to their homes, and flows of migratory birds, as teleportative or quasi-teleportative" – Fort, *Books*, p572. **FT**



# Stranger, darker things

*Stranger Things* was the unexpected hit of 2016, but its inspiration was a fund of conspiracy lore involving mind control and abducted children. **STU FERROL** wonders whether something even darker lurks behind all the high strangeness.



**STU FERROL** is a writer, comedian and a postgraduate student. He hails from the northeast and has written previously for *Forteant Times* on the mystery of the Hexham Heads.

**S**tranger Things, for those who have been living in the Upside Down, is a smash-hit Netflix series ecstatically received by critics and viewers alike [reviewed FT344:64]. Created by twins Matt and Ross Duffer (The Duffer Brothers), the show is an economical eight-episode mix of conspiracy, supernatural drama and action wrapped in a meringue of 1980s nostalgia that not only brings in references from staples such as Spielberg, John Carpenter and Stephen King (even the show's opening titles use a typeface like that on the covers of early King novels), but seems to bask in a virtual reality entirely formed from their cross-pollination. Drizzle on a vintage Carpenter/Tangerine Dream-esque 80s synth soundtrack and the package is complete.

The action takes place in a small town (where else?) where the chief of police finds himself for once taking on a case of some significance when a 12-year-old boy called Will goes missing. As the chief and Will's distraught mother search for the missing boy, Will's group of Goonies-like, *Dungeons and Dragons* playing friends stumble upon a mysterious, shaven-headed girl with amazing powers of telekinesis. Everything begins to centre (light spoilers here) on a secretive nearby military base masquerading as a utility company. It's this base, and what happens inside it, which we are interested in here.

When the Duffer Brothers were pitching the show around the TV networks it was originally entitled "Montauk" after the area in Long Island, New York. It was here, at a base called Camp Hero (so named when under the purview of the US Army, afterwards changing hands and becoming Montauk Point Air Force Station) that similar experiments on children to harness psi-abilities and programme minds were alleged to have taken place. Just as in the TV show, these children were

supposedly abducted and – at least according to Preston B Nichols, the main purveyor of the Montauk mythos – "broken down" by the application of psychological and physical torture.

Known as either the 'Montauk Project' or 'Montauk Experiment', tales of these weird shadowy shenanigans have been circulating since the early 1980s, when *Stranger Things* is set. In fact, according to Nichols in his series of books on the subject, the experiments culminated in the accidental creation of a rip in space-time in 1983: this mirrors not only the exact year the show is set but also a major plot point. The open-ended nature of the supposed experiments has allowed the Montauk Project to snowball and pick up connections to other phenomena and conspiracies along the way, including but not restricted to: the Philadelphia Experiment, time travel, reptoid aliens, extradimensional monsters, mind control, Nazis and, for good measure, the faked Moon landings.<sup>1</sup>

It was on *Coast to Coast AM* on the night of Saturday 14 February 2015 that the Montauk Experiments took a decidedly more disturbing turn.<sup>2</sup> Guest host Connie Willis had finished interviewing Christopher Garetano, whose film *Montauk*



*Chronicles* had just been released, and Preston B Nichols was guesting for the rest of the show. He was asked about the "Montauk Boys", the children abducted to take part in the experiments. These children were, according to Nichols, beaten to within an inch of their lives before being "put back together" – only they were now programmed by mind control and geared up for psychic experimentation.

Asked how they were "put back together", Nichols segued into the controversial work of Wilhelm Reich, in particular the elusive sexual energy 'orgone'. He then described his first encounter with this mysterious force back in his teenage years: in the middle of a conversation a friend had dropped his trousers and begun to masturbate in front of the young Nichols. Instead of making for the door and the nearest counsellor, Nichols stayed and watched as a glowing orb "came" from the tip of the youth's penis and then commenced to float around the room before being popped by Nichols (if you've never worried about all those orb photographs on the Internet seen, perhaps it's time you did!). Host Willis, nearly having a coronary and seeing her chances of being asked back to the show swiftly disappearing, nevertheless pushed on. But when the discussion continued it went into less overtly bizarre but more sinister terrain.

Seeing where all this was leading, Willis put it as simply as she could: were these children not only beaten but raped? Nichols, knowingly or not – perhaps caught up in the moment and intent on keeping the unhealthy co-dependence and transference of the attention-seeking confessor and interrogator going – said "yes"; and instantly nudged the whole Montauk Project into the disturbing realm of institutionalised child sex abuse. If it wasn't bad enough that these alleged child subjects had been abducted and experimented upon, they had also been systematically sexually abused by members of the military, and by implication the US Government.

Nichols has claimed – on various shows, podcasts and films – that he was the one in charge of "putting back together" these child abductees. Did he realise that by revealing the unsavoury methods supposedly used he had implicated himself in the rape of children? Perhaps the full consequences of Nichols's bizarre 'confession' weren't to the forefront of his mind as he was carried along on the wave of attention he was receiving;



and, anyway, what could anyone do, as there wasn't a shred of evidence to back up anything concerning the Montauk Project?

And why would anyone believe anything Preston B Nichols said anyway? Let's look, for instance, at his explanation for how he was working full-time, in a normal job, during the entire period he claims to have also been conducting experiments at Montauk. He claims his bosses at the base were able to manipulate time in such a way that he could work all day for them before his day would be 'reset' and he would then go to work at his regular job. Due to this procedure, his memories were wiped after each day at Montauk; his subsequent recollections were only made possible, of course, due to the recovery of repressed memories.

But Nichols's life was pretty weird way before the memory wipes started. He claims he was abducted himself, aged 11, and taken into space – to the Pleiades, to be precise – where he was cured of cerebral palsy. Whether or not this also explains the long list of qualifications he claims to have, despite a lack of evidence, is anyone's guess. Coincidentally he also insists to have been a sound engineer on many famous recordings, including some by Bob Dylan (fingered by some UFO nuts as an abductee himself; see FT344:28).

Putting aside the fantastical tales of one man, it's hard to avoid the disturbing possibility that while the organised and secretive sexual abuse of children, clouded by the fog of the paranormal, probably never took place at Montauk, it could have happened elsewhere. America is yet to have its Yewtree moment. Until the full facts

of the many cases unearthed by that police operation came to light in the UK, we were in the main sceptical of cover-ups by establishment institutions. Although rumours have circulated about Hollywood for quite a while, most of the American establishment has escaped suspicion.

It could be the perfect cover-up: the victim is either not believed, or is treated as someone who believes himself to have been a victim of abduction by aliens rather than humans.

The motifs of alien abduction have a strong undercurrent of sexual abuse: being taken from bed, the inability to move or fight back, weird medical procedures, the harvesting of sperm or eggs... are these the repressed memories of childhood trauma playing out through a modern shared myth, or actual memories of abuse clinically manipulated and camouflaged by the same myth? Perhaps this was the true mind control being practised at Montauk.

Some abduction cases are not one-off affairs and often victims will claim they have been 'taken' repeatedly since childhood,<sup>3</sup> but cases of children reporting being abducted are few and far between. It doesn't help that children are, by nature, fantasy-prone and not as capable as adults of distinguishing between imagined and actual memories. Some are believed though, and the website [aliensandchildren.org](http://aliensandchildren.org), while cases are thin on the ground, does have drawings of aliens made by children purported to have been abducted.

The website also makes an attempt to link child abduction by aliens with

the autism epidemic, which is blamed on experimentation by said aliens rather than better diagnoses and/or genetic/environmental factors. Autism, according to the website, can actually be alleviated or stopped altogether by wearing a "Thought Screen Helmet". One parent of two children diagnosed autistic (who also drew pictures of aliens and abductions) claims the wearing of such a helmet to bed for over 10 years "helped to heal" them of their autism.

As someone who was recently diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, I can safely say I'll not be trying this method. I can also say I have never been abducted by aliens, but I did used to draw some scary pictures when I was a child: this was described in an early visit to a child psychologist as being caused by anxiety, and retrofitted with the knowledge of my autism can be explained as a response to finding myself in a scary world I had problems interacting and dealing with. This may well be the case for other children in a similar situation. Nowadays they may draw Greys, but back in the mid-1970s I drew whatever I was exposed to in the media: King Kong, Flash Gordon, Doctor Who and whatever else I'd seen on television that week.<sup>4</sup>

While cases of children reporting being abducted by aliens are vanishingly small, adults' experiences appear to feature a lot of infantile motifs and traits, not least the inability to fight back. Could these be flashbacks not to repressed memories, but fake ones created to cover up something even more sinister? Remember how a few victims snowballed to many as soon Operation Yewtree hit the media. Could *Stranger Things* open the floodgates and lead to America's Yew(FO)tree moment? **FT**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Montauk Project: Experiments in Time*, Preston B Nichols with Peter Moon, Sky Books 2011; [www.de173.com/the-montauk-project/](http://www.de173.com/the-montauk-project/); <http://disinfo.com/2012/07/the-montauk-project/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.coasttocoastam.com/2015/02/14](http://www.coasttocoastam.com/2015/02/14) (you will need to be a *Coast to Coast AM* Insider subscriber to download the mp3s).

<sup>3</sup> <http://ufodigest.com/article/childhood-alien-abduction>

<sup>4</sup> In Spielberg's Emmy-winning mini-series *Taken* (2002; not to be confused with the overly-protective-father film series starring Liam Neeson), a young child was "groomed" by aliens who appeared to him as figures from children's popular culture. Although this looked great on the screen, and was perhaps an aside about the pervasiveness of media, there is very little evidence of this ever happening in 'real' alien abduction lore.

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# reviews



## When forteana and SF mixed

In the last quarter of the last century, the cross-pollination of parapsychology and science fiction produced a plethora of open-minded and uncynical magazines



### Science Fiction Rebels

The Story of the Science-Fiction Magazine from 1981 to 1990

Mike Ashley

Liverpool University Press 2016

Hb, 473pp, ind, £75.00, ISBN 9781781382608

During the late '70s and early '80s I spent hours skulking around the legendary SF and comic bookshop Dark They Were and Golden Eyed. I almost certainly bought my first issue of *Fortean Times* there. From Spring 1978, it was *FT*'s mailing address. If you'd told me that almost 40 years later I'd be writing for *Fortean Times*, I wouldn't have believed you.

Dark They Were is also almost certainly where I picked up Mike Ashley's *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine*, the first volume of which NEL published in 1974. Ashley wanted to pay "tribute to the underdog of literature, the science fiction magazine". He succeeded admirably, combining pithy well-informed summaries and well-chosen stories. Four of these superlative volumes took the story up to 1965. I've read each several times.

Recently, Ashley revised and massively expanded the historical elements, without the stories, into a series of seminal works. Now published by Liverpool University Press, these are far from dense academic tomes. Ashley writes with skill, passion and insight. The excitement he feels for the genre is apparent on every page. The

depth and breadth of the research is stunning, covering countries as diverse as Uruguay, Croatia, Finland – and even Mongolia, which had a pocketbook of magazine between 1976 and 1990.

*Science-Fiction Rebels* covers 1981 to 1990, a decade, Ashley notes, that saw "radical changes and movements", including the rise of cyberpunk, splatterpunk and the slipstream. Indeed, during the 1980s, SF magazines "allowed many writers to release the shackles from conventional SF and encourage it to spread its wings far more than in any earlier decade". This was especially true in the alternative SF press such as the wonderful Back Brain Recluse, which "was an essential part of keeping SF alive, fresh and aware" and encouraged a "rebellion against an overcommercialisation of formulaic science fiction".

The decade was also, arguably, less aggressively sceptical and cynical than today. Many magazines mixed speculative science, SF stories with more fortean topics, such as parapsychology and UFOs. *Omni*, a glossy publication from the publisher of *Penthouse*, is probably the most famous example. Indeed, *Omni* reached a massive readership – more than 750,000 in 1981–82. My copy from November 1979, for example, includes the visionary SF artist Chris Foss, an interview with Cambridge University's first PhD in parapsychology, extracts from Heinlein's *The Number of the Beast* and discussions about the legal rights of extraterrestrials.

*Omni* wasn't an isolated example. Greece seemed especially interested in UFOs and unexplained phenomena, Ashley notes. *Ainigmata tou Symbandos*

"Many magazines mixed speculative science and SF stories with more fortean topics"

(Riddles of the Universe) covered parapsychology, UFOs, SETI, science and SF, for instance. I loved (and still do) *Ad Astra*, a British magazine that combined "speculative science and strange phenomena". My issue 7, from I think late 1979 (it's not dated so far as I can see), covers SETI, *Quatermass*, a couple of short stories and Bryan Talbot's witty 'Frank Fazakerley Space Ace of the Future'.

Ashley says that *Ad Astra* looked "drab and uninteresting" compared to *Omni*. Certainly, it looked more like a fanzine... but for me that was part of the appeal. Contemporary issues of *Fortean Times* had something of the same fannish charm. Sadly, *Ad Astra* lasted only 16 issues. *Fortean Times* has remarked on the cross fertilisation between SF and fortean pursuits before. I wonder if the lack of such open-minded magazines contributed to the dogmatic, close-minded scepticism that often seems rife today.

Ashley reminds us how many excellent magazines fell by the wayside, such as *Fear*, which mainly focused on horror fiction and media, and, to a lesser extent, SF and fantasy. Then there's magazines I'd almost forgotten about: *Mondo 2000*, *Science Fiction Digest* and *Aboriginal Science Fiction*. Fortunately, other magazines showed

greater longevity. *Interzone*, first published in March 1982, casts a massive shadow over British SF and is still going. The first issue featured a 'stellar' cast of authors, including Michael Moorcock, Keith Roberts, M John Harrison and Angela Carter.

One of the delights of Ashley's book is coming across books and stories you overlooked first time around. In my case, for instance, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Escape from Kathmandu* about rescuing yetis is now close to the top of my reading pile. And Ashley prompted me to re-read *Mythago Wood* published in 1981 – Robert Holdstock's stunning novel about an ancient woodland that is home to "the ancient creatures of faery that have otherwise vanished from our world".

By the end of the decade, SF zines were boldly going where no SF magazine had gone before: into cyberspace: 1989 saw the launch of the prototype digital SF magazines *Athena*, *Quanta* and *Axxón*, the latter from Argentina. *Axxón* used a non-commercial program to read a 140 e-zine on a floppy disk. It was the "world's first regular e-zine to be devoted to science fiction" – and it's still online ([axxon.com.ar](http://axxon.com.ar)). SF publishing would never be the same.

The paperback of the original part one cost me £1.50. The hardback costs £75... I had to wait for the paperback of the previous volume *Gateways to Forever*, which covered 1970 to 1980. But *Science Fiction Rebels* is a fantastic book well worthy of a Hugo.

Mark Greener

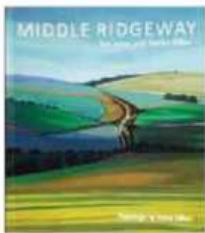
### Fortean Times Verdict

GIVE MIKE ASHLEY A HUGO  
AWARD NOW!

9

# Walk on chalk

**Environmental historians encapsulate the quintessence of English landscape**



## Middle Ridgeway

Eric Jones & Patrick Dillon

Wessex Books 2016

Pb, 144pp, illus, further reading, refs, £16.95, ISBN 9781903035481

Running all the way from Devon to Lincolnshire, the Ridgeway is renowned as one of Britain's longest and most ancient footpaths. There are many walking guides to the route that include snippets of history, but this compelling and important work by Eric Jones and Patrick Dillon demonstrates that the Ridgeway is far more than just a recreational path with spectacular views.

Elegantly written, the book is also extremely beautiful.

Printed on thick, art-quality paper, it is illustrated with 20 of Anna Dillon's gorgeous paintings.

Luminous and visionary, they perfectly capture this most English of landscapes.

As 'environmental historians' or 'cultural ecologists', Jones and Dillon guide us on a Ridgeway walk through time, from the Mesolithic to the present day. Focusing on one section, the 'Middle Ridgeway' between Streatley and Avebury, they examine the changing fortunes and usage of what they term an 'ecological island'.

The relative value of land, livestock and produce has fluctuated over the centuries. Farmland was worth so little in 1930 that a bold plan was

hatched. The Government, it was proposed, should buy huge tracts of the Berkshire Downs to create an American-style national park, "organised somewhat on the lines of Yellowstone". Sadly, the call went unheeded and for its Old Faithful, Berkshire had to settle for the distant, steaming towers of Didcot Power Station.

The high ground of the Middle Ridgeway is conspicuously uninhabited – those who travel its length must leave the path and descend into the villages for food and water. Yet, for centuries, this barren chalkland provided a living for many country folk. Today, we delight in the twittering of skylarks as synonymous with rural beauty and tranquillity, but this was not always so. Nineteenth century farmers regarded all wildlife as pests that must be shot, trapped or netted: in 1854 a claimed 400,000 skylarks were sold on the London market alone.

Almost every species we value and protect today was once regarded as food, and 'badger feasts' continued into the 20th century.

Middle Ridgeway

is essential

reading for anyone who loves the English countryside, with all its rich, changing diversity. As Jones and Dillon put it: "The look of the chalklands varies with the crops and the seasons: during early summer the lush growth of plants on the few unattended scraps of land is utterly unlike the brown, wind-blown grass of winter. At one season it is hard to remember how different it is from the other."

Steve Marshall



### Fortean Times Verdict

BEAUTIFUL AND VISIONARY BOOK  
ON A GREAT LANDSCAPE

8

## More Encounters with Star People

**Urban American Indians Tell Their Stories**

Ardy Sixkiller Clarke

Anomalist Books 2016

Pb, 321pp, bib, \$17.95, ISBN 9781938398629

Ardy Sixkiller Clarke spends much of her time at Montana University collecting accounts of UFO experiences from her fellow American Indians. *More Encounters with Star People* is a sequel to *Encounters with Star People* (FT305:63) and her third UFO-themed book. The second, *Sky People* (FT328:58), highlights encounters among the indigenous people of Central America.

Theorists committed to psychosocial/cultural approaches to ufology will be disappointed to learn that American Indians experience UFOs and their occupants pretty much as do people in the United States and elsewhere, though their interpretations may reflect Native traditions. Some of Dr Clarke's informants think of the beings with whom they have interacted as benign 'Star People', ancestors to the Indian peoples, while others more brusquely characterise them as 'aliens', up to no good. The last notion – that at least some aliens are a menace – feels right out of the books of abductionologists David M Jacobs and the late Budd Hopkins. However, all of Clarke's informants speak from alleged conscious recall. Hypnosis never enters the picture, but the accounts are essentially identical to those in other UFO literature. One unsettling theme echoes Jacobs's in particular, the contention that through induced pregnancies and genetic manipulation aliens are creating a hybrid race which one day will supplant *Homo sapiens*.

An abductee identified as 'Charley' – like everybody else here, known only by pseudonym – testifies: "our perceptions of them... I don't think they are friendly, nor do I think they care for humans at all."

Clarke does not appear to

have led her informants to such beliefs. Their testimony, captured on tape and transcribed, seems spontaneous and straightforward. But even in Indian communities witnesses face disbelief and ridicule, thus their insistence, Clarke writes, on anonymity.

Other stories concern mutilations by aliens of various animals, one of them a polar bear. These are not pleasant to read, and even the witnesses, lifelong hunters, report being distressed by what they saw. Still, "not all aliens are bad", affirms one informant, who says they rescued him from a life-threatening situation and fixed a broken bone which had left him helpless on a frigid mountain at night.

One account bears an arguable significance Clarke misses. A man tells her of watching a UFO land in front of his vehicle and a humanlike figure emerge. As he stared at the sight, the informant relates, "I kept hearing the word 'cold' in my head... I heard that word ... many times." Those of us with long memories will recall 1960s West Virginia contactee, the star of John Keel's classic *The Mothman Prophecies*, Woody Derenberger, whose space friend's monicker was 'Indrid Cold'. To this day it's my all-time favorite alien name.

*More Encounters* is neither exactly a work of folklore research nor a chronicle of an active UFO investigator. It consists of stories of what her informants represent as their memories of real-life encounters. These are not mere tribal legends, in other words. Clarke attests to the claimants' apparent sincerity, and I respect her judgment. It is clear from the current volume that her books are widely read in Indian Country, no doubt because they give a previously neglected population a voice.

Whatever one makes of them – in other words, whether one sees them as extraordinary events or as (my own view) experience anomalies occurring in some kind of liminal space – they undeniably make for compelling reading.

Jerome Clark

### Fortean Times Verdict

NATIVE AMERICANS EXPERIENCE  
UFOS LITTLE DIFFERENTLY TO OTHERS

9

## The Divine Madness of Philip K Dick

Kyle Arnold

Oxford University Press 2016  
Hb, 234pp, illus, bib, ind, PRICE, ISBN 9780199743254



Few 20th-century SF authors have captured the fortean imagination as much as Philip K Dick.

Dick, who blended autobiography with speculation about the nature of reality in his fiction, was open about his belief that he had been contacted by a higher power during a spiritual experience in 1974. His descriptions of this experience varied over the years, confusing fans and critics.

Psychologist Kyle Arnold's *The Divine Madness of Philip K Dick* is a "psychobiography" combining a slim biography with an attempt to analyse Dick's experiences – and many of the recurring themes in his fiction – psychologically. He examines Dick's traumatic early childhood, his adult relationships, his drug addiction and his revelatory experiences. The centre of the book is the series of visions or delusions Dick experienced in February and March of 1974, a period he referred to as '2-3-74', but Arnold covers other aspects of Dick's life and writings.

Arnold establishes connections between themes that fascinated Dick – dangerous doubles, threatening authority figures and the idea that rescue from danger may have its own risks – and his lifelong psychological fixations, many of them arising from neglect by his mother and his sister's death in infancy. According to Arnold, these ideas recur throughout Dick's life, not only in his fiction but in how he saw the world. Arnold argues that Dick's hallucinations were not evidence of mental illness – after the experience of 2-3-74, he briefly became mentally and emotionally healthier, though this sense of wholeness eventually slipped away from him. In fact, Arnold suggests, Dick's visions were an attempt to resolve a "psychospiritual crisis," giving him full access to parts

of his own faculties. The incident in which he diagnosed his son's hernia with the aid of a mysterious voice is an example of this – Dick's subconscious revealing information that he knew but had been unable to act on. His visions made him healthier, and the deterioration of his mental health corresponded with their loss.

Some Dick fans will automatically find fault with a biography that ties Dick's visions to his psychology and state of mind rather than viewing him as a genuine visionary revealing the hidden structure of the Universe, but Arnold's approach isn't dismissive. *The Divine Madness* presents the things Dick saw as important and worthy of study, even though they were products of Dick's brain rather than visions of reality. For a psychologist, after all, the fact that something is a product of the mind hardly makes it less important. The book also isn't as lenient with Dick as some fans tend to be – he appears not just as a brilliant writer but as a deeply flawed human being: vain, needy, neglectful, paranoid and abusive.

One thing that *Divine Madness* isn't is a work of literary criticism or literary history, and this may be one of its few shortcomings. Writers like Thomas Disch and Tim Powers appear only as friends, colleagues and rivals; we don't learn much about his literary context, influence or legacy. This isn't an oversight so much as a feature of the book's focus – it's about Dick the person. Even more so than for most writers, however, it's hard to celebrate the lived and literary Dicks, and it might have been helpful to see a little more about the influences that led to the construction of Dick's visions.

*The Divine Madness of Philip K Dick* combines a solid biography with thoughtful and even-handed analysis. It's not an ideal introduction to Dick, but it isn't only for hardcore enthusiasts either. It's accessible enough for readers who know some of the writer's work but not the details of his strange life.

James Holloway

### Fortean Times Verdict

A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY OF A GREAT 20TH CENTURY SF WRITER

8

## To boldly go...

The glorious oddity and humour of our world revealed for the armchair traveller



### Atlas Obscura

An Explorer's Guide to the World's Hidden Wonders

Joshua Foer, Dylan Thuras & Ella Morton

Workman Publishing 2016  
Pb, 452pp, illus, ind, £25.00, ISBN 978076116908

I first ran across *Atlas Obscura* in its online form. The oddness of its content – everything from the Historic Tuba Collection to Littleton's Cryptozoology & Paranormal Museum, complete with haunted doll and Bigfoot casts – won my heart, and who could not love the enthusiasm with which Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel reviewed Disneyland, the "Garden of Eden for children here in this life"?

In the introduction to this print version, Joshua Foer and Dylan Thuras suggest that wonder "can be found wherever we are open to searching for it". Amen to that.

They explain that the site and the book are "a kind of Wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities meant to inspire wonderlust as much as wanderlust. In fact many of the places in this book are in no way 'tourist sites' and should not be treated as such." Indeed, some of the places mentioned are nigh impossible to treat as tourist sites: Vanuatu's fully functional – and underwater – post office does not appear in the book, but we find post-circumcision land-diving (chucking yourself off a rickety bamboo tower tied to a liana, which may or may not be the right length and strength to ensure you do not faceplant on the jungle floor), which ensures a good yam harvest. The underwater

Republic of Minerva (claimed by Tonga after large dumps of sand made it peep above the waves) is probably not on anyone's bucket list. Some entire countries – Libya and Syria, for starters – are now off-limits. The Church of St Simon the Stylite, an hour's drive from Aleppo, has suffered in the years since we visited it, and Lebanon's enormous Baalbek Trilithon (Fortean Traveller, FT151:51) is probably now only for the more risk-tolerant tourist. But that still leaves around 600 places to explore (or, preferably, read about).

Highlights in England include Okehampton's steampunk-y leech-powered Tempest Prognosticator. Its inventor, George Merryweather, thought they not only possessed humanlike instincts but could forecast weather, so built a merry-go-round like contraption within which leeches rising to the top of their glass bottle at the approach of bad weather triggered a bell. Antrim has Loughareema Lake, which may or may not be worth a visit depending on whether it's there when you plan to visit – it's known as the Vanishing Lake.

The urge to categorise knowledge looms large. The Mundaneum, in Belgium, aimed to compile the entirety of human knowledge on 3 x 5 index cards. St Petersburg's Kunstkamera achieves the same more visually.

The book is divided by continent, with maps, where the attraction is on the remote side, transport information, grid references and recommendations of selected oddities nearby. It is heavily and illustrated with terrific photos.

Some entries will be familiar to *FT* readers; others won't. Pleasure, though, is almost guaranteed.

Val Stevenson

### Fortean Times Verdict

GREAT LOO READING FOR THE TRAVEL-STRUCK FORTEAN

9

# Make your own luck

The theme of altamirage – luck that arises from personal traits and obsessions – underpins this curious medical memoir



## Mentored by a Madman

**The William Burroughs Experiment**

AJ Lees

Notting Hill Editions 2016

Hb, 214pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781910749104

The role of serendipity in research is a familiar idea, but the concept of ‘altamirage’, a variety of luck involving personal interests and behaviour, is less known. (The word was coined by neurologist James Austin, from the discovery of the cave paintings at Altamira.) Altamirage provides the epigraph and underlying theme for this unusual medical memoir by Andrew Lees, one of the world’s leading authorities on Parkinson’s disease, who has found unexpected inspiration in the life and work of William Burroughs.

At first sight Burroughs is an unlikely mentor for medical research: he championed magic against science, and operated an electro-magical “wishing machine”. He also had an extraordinary imagination, with a wistful sense of infinite possibilities, and he was the arch self-experimenter, a practice now out of fashion in medicine despite its unimpeachable ethics.

Lees is appalled by contemporary research culture and academic bureaucracy. He believes in inspired empiricism, in the re-investigation of obscure treatments, and above all in working with patients as collaborators; he remembers the culture of “freedom, intellectual diversity, flexibility, and originality”, only 25 years ago, that allowed him to conduct a

cannabis trial after a Parkinson’s patient thought it reduced her tremor. Some of the most fascinating material in this book comes from patients’ testimony of side-effects, particularly concerning the Parkinson’s drug L-DOPA. Users experienced hypersexuality, impulsive behaviour (one man ordered 24 pet turtles), and so-called “punding”, where individuals become totally engrossed in tasks of a generally repetitive, detailed, or ritualistic nature. A woman sorted thousands of buttons, a man circled London 20 times a night in his car, and another constructed “a monstrous Heath-Robinson computer that grew and grew until it filled the whole of one bedroom.” Lees’s insight into the curious byways of L-DOPA deepened when a patient introduced him to “a demi-monde of blogs” where L-DOPA enthusiasts revealed “a candyland dream world of DOPA highs.”

Prolonged L-DOPA use brings further problems of its own, causing periods of neurological “switching-off”. Lees chanced on a breakthrough treatment for these after dreaming he was underwater, watching plankton, and recognising the molecular shape of apomorphine: a substance with a peculiar, Grail-like significance for Burroughs. Burroughs was weaned off drugs for a long period by London physician John Dent, using a maverick apomorphine treatment, and he came to believe it could cure all forms of addiction by regulating the brain’s metabolism. It became part of the mythology of his work, with apomorphine and heroin as Manichaean poles of good and evil, freedom and addiction. Lees obtained supplies and – after trying it on himself – discovered it works on the brain’s dopamine receptors, and was surprisingly valuable for Parkinson’s. This was undeniably a stroke of luck, but on a continuum

of chance – moving across blind chance and total accident; exploratory behaviour and ‘happy accident’; the chance that favours the prepared mind; and finally the chance that arises from personal traits, interests and obsessions – it comes at this latter, ‘altamirage’ end of the spectrum, and it wouldn’t have happened had Lees not been steeped in Burroughs.

*Mentored by a Madman* is partly autobiography: Lees remembers doctoring in London during the dog-end of the Swinging Sixties and drinking in the Grave Maurice, the Kray pub. We learn about other things he has a feeling for besides Burroughs, including molecules, redundant foreign ports and South America. He celebrates botanical explorers and plant collectors such as Richard Spruce, a Victorian in the Amazon: “In this green Mars he saw things that he knew had never been seen before by the trained eye – sensational plant forms that he feared he would never behold again. His descriptions left me with an indelible impression of the convulsive beauty of the forest.” Spruce discovered the vine *Banisteria caapi*, source of the hallucinogen yage, which drew Burroughs to the Amazon in 1953. When Lees discovers that its active ingredient, harmine, had a brief vogue around 1930 as a wonder-drug for Parkinson’s (it was prescribed for Hitler as late as 1945) the next step is “a new journey of radical empiricism” taking him to the cabin of a Colombian shaman woman.

This is not just a wonderfully left-field addition to the Burroughs literature, but an important polemic for more humane and imaginative medical research. I was sorry to reach the end.

Herbert Penton

### Fortean Times Verdict

A MUST-READ FOR BURROUGHS ENTHUSIASTS AND THE CURIOUS

9

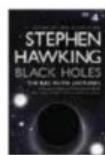
## Black Holes

**The BBC Reith Lectures**

Stephen Hawking

Bantam Books 2016

Pb, vi + 74 pp, illus, £3.99, ISBN 9780857503572



There are the black holes of popular imagination, which appear out of thin air, swallow up whatever happens to be in the vicinity, such as a passing Malaysian airliner, and whisk the passengers off to a parallel dimension. Then there are real black holes, which occur at the uneasy intersection of the three main branches of modern physics – general relativity, quantum theory and thermodynamics – and push them to the very limit of what they were designed to handle. The second kind of black holes are the really exciting ones – but it takes a genius like Stephen Hawking to get that message across clearly and concisely, without dumbing it down out of all recognition.

On that basis, I’ve given this little book a top rating – but there are a few things you need to be aware of before rushing out to buy it.

First, Hawking’s contribution consists of just two 15-minute radio lectures, the entire text of which is freely available on the BBC website. With the help of a large font, plenty of white space, some cartoony illustrations (which are brilliant, by the way) and the usual topping and tailing, the book just manages to make it to 80 pages. Worst of all, Hawking’s wonderfully clear and inspiring text is periodically interrupted by gratuitous annotations inserted by BBC editor David Shukman. At best these simply repeat what Hawking just said, and at worst they represent a journalistic mangling of the science that’s little short of vandalism.

Still, it’s a nicely produced book with an affordable price tag, and I’d毫不犹豫地 recommend it to all Hawking fans (just remember to skip over Shukman’s annotations, though).

Andrew May

### Fortean Times Verdict

LUCID INTRODUCTION TO CUTTING-EDGE SCIENCE OF BLACK HOLES

9



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### Doctor Strange

Dir Scott Derrickson, US 2016  
On UK release from 28 October

While Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's Spider-Man needs no introduction, it's probably safe to say that their subsequent creation, Doctor Strange, is hardly a household name (FT readers excepted, of course) despite having been on the scene for almost as long as Spidey himself. Arriving in 1963 – a fusion of Ditko's inimitably bizarre visuals and Lee's alliterative incantations ("By the Hoary Hosts of Hoggoth!" etc) – Strange caught on more with the underground than the mainstream. The Ayn Rand-worshipping Ditko might have been the straightest man on the planet, but to Ken Kesey, the Merry Pranksters, the Grateful Dead and other contemporary explorers of inner space, he seemed to be drawing a roadmap to the new dimensions unlocked by the psychedelic experience; the good doctor became the counterculture's superhero of choice – and the fact that he lived in hip Greenwich Village probably didn't hurt.

Marvel Studios and director Scott Derrickson have done a pretty good job at translating much of this mind-bending weirdness to the big screen: the trips to other dimensions are intense and genuinely, well, trippy, and

the special effects employed to realise them are indeed pretty special: whole cities turning in on themselves to become moving, three-dimensional Escher drawings; Ditko abstractions reimagined as vast, organic-looking strands of inter-dimensional matter; time running forwards and backwards simultaneously – this is all great, heady fun as well as stuff that we haven't seen in the cinema before (although one sequence eerily replicates an experience I had while under the influence of *Salvia divinorum*, many Moons of Munnopor ago).

Perhaps it's no surprise that the rest of the film can't really live up to its weirdest, wildest moments. It's an origin story, of course, so certain stops need to be made along the way. Stephen Strange's own Pilgrim's Progress – from insufferably arrogant neurosurgeon to wounded seeker after salvation to Master of the Mystic Arts – is a classic 'Journey to the East' in search of spiritual enlightenment. It's adumbrated in a mere five pages in the original comic, and feels almost as condensed here. Soon, though, this merges with the classic hero's journey, torn straight from the pages of Joseph Campbell and complete with mentors, helpers, trials and rewards. Benedict Cumberbatch does a splendid job – far

better than many predicted – in the title role, making Strange genuinely hard to warm to for much of the film and rendering his eventual moral awakening and redemption – here, a typically tricksy conceit involving the nature of time – rather affecting. Tilda Swinton's Ancient One is an impressive and playful presence, lighting up the screen every time she appears, although perhaps more time could have been devoted to her relationship with her new student. It all seems to come a bit too easily to our hero after he's met her, and in no time he's punching well above his magical weight when battling rogue sorcerer Kaecilius (an enjoyably villainous if one-note Mads Mikkelsen), who is trying to open a door to the Dark Dimension. Strange is aided by the redoubtable Wong and the more ambiguous Mordo (Benedict Wong and Chiwetel Ejiofor, both on top form and leaving the audience hungry for more), as well as a largely wasted Rachel McAdams, who's really only there as a straight woman reacting to the high strangeness her ex-colleague brings with him when he returns to the mundane realm of New York City.

Not quite the sum of its parts, then – excellent performances across the board, spellbinding

effects and beautiful visual design can't entirely banish the thought that the plot's a bit thin – but *Doctor Strange* is never less than highly enjoyable; and now the character has been introduced into the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the possibilities are endless. See it in 3D if you can, and do stay until the end credits have rolled.

David Sutton

### Fortean Times Verdict

BY THE VISHANTI, A MOSTLY MARVELLOUS MAGICAL TRIP

8

### We Are the Flesh

Dir Emilio Rocha Minter, Mexico 2016  
On UK release from 18 November

*We Are the Flesh* is the feature debut of Mexican director Emilio Rocha Minter. It tells the story of a brother and sister trying to survive in a ruined, post-apocalyptic city. In their search for food and shelter they meet a deranged loner who has plenty of both and agrees to let them stay in return for their help in building a weird, cavernous structure inside his apartment; but his demands soon become increasingly disturbing.

While the film offers striking, even beautiful, imagery and has what is probably a deeply relevant social commentary about Mexican society at its core, like so many 'transgressive' arthouse horrors before it, *We Are the Flesh* stumbles when using shock value to tell its story. While there's a certain raw, rebellious poetry in the gruesome portrayal of an unfortunate soldier being bled to death, the endless and extremely explicit pornographic scenes involving the three main characters walk a fine line between storytelling device and tiresome gimmick; as someone who has suffered through the films of Lars von Trier and Nicholas Winding Refn, I find such elements have a way of making the viewer lose interest. While thankfully not as tediously long as anything von Trier or Refn could muster, this still feels like something the pair might have come up with after taking a trip to Mexico, doing a copious amount of drugs and deciding to make a film about the power of the womb and the joys

of incest.

Not one for the squeamish, this bodily fluid-drenched endurance test of a film certainly makes an impression on the viewer; for most, though, this will probably take the form of sheer frustration at the loss of 79 minutes they could have spent doing something more worthwhile.

Leyla Mika Sol Mikkelsen

### Fortean Times Verdict

A POLARISING PARADE OF DEPRAVITY AND DEATH

**5**

### Creepy

Dir Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Japan 2016

On UK release from 25 November

The title of this tense psychological thriller rather undersells it. The full title, my wonderful Japanese friend Shoko informs me, translates as 'Creepy: False Neighbour', which is a bit clunky but much better. And more accurate too because the film deals with Takakura (Hidetoshi Yoshijima), a former detective, now a university lecturer, who becomes intrigued by an unsolved missing persons case and slowly begins to suspect that his mercurial neighbour may have been behind it.

The film presents this initially as two separate strands in which the suspicion and mistrust of the first slowly bleeds into the other. In one, Takakura digs deeper and deeper into the case to resolve his bitterness at having had to leave the force prematurely. In the other, his wife Yasuko (Yuko Takeuchi), home alone all day in a new neighbourhood, attempts to make friends with their new neighbours and becomes progressively more unnerved by the unfriendly and frankly downright odd behaviour she encounters, especially from Mr Nishino (Teruyuki Kagawa, one of Japan's most respected actors, both in cinema and traditional Kabuki theatre). An atmosphere of deep unease is established almost from the first frame and director Kurosawa builds it up slowly until it genuinely becomes a knot in your stomach.

The performances are top notch, the compositions are beautiful (even reminding me once or twice of Antonioni) and the camerawork restrained. It has to be said the film stretches credulity

## THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! ([www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com](http://www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com); @revpeterlaws)

### THE HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS FEAST

Dir Herschell Gordon Lewis, US 1963-72  
Arrow Video, £120 (Dual format)

On 26 September the name Herschell Gordon Lewis suddenly cropped up on mainstream news feeds. Sadly, it wasn't the announcement of *Blood Feast* 3, but the sad news that he had died, aged 90. BBC News, the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* all reported it, bringing the 'Godfather of Gore' to a wider audience who might have never heard of him if not for his death. There's an irony here, because after making a string of nudie pictures in the early 1960s, Lewis had already recognised this exact same principle: death gets people's attention... and the grislier the better.

This 18-disc set showcases Lewis's mission to turn the silver screen red, and it kicks off with the still arresting *Blood Feast* (1963). There's ropey editing and laughable acting, it's true: but a woman gets her tongue torn out on screen and there are semi-naked bodies strewn with gore. One commentator on the set says that as a kid he always wondered how we got from the genteel horror of Universal to the blood explosions of 1970s and 1980s cinema. When he saw *Blood Feast*, he says, he got his answer.

Then there's *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964), the backwoods horror in which Northern city slickers get hacked and sliced by Southerners in a bizarre Civil War-fuelled revenge ritual. It's actually a pretty nifty concept. This 'degenerate redneck' theme also crops up in *This Stuff'll Kill Ya* (1971), a lesser known moonshine thriller with the weirdest church wedding you'll ever see. The bride has to strip and have sex with the lustful congregation, all in honour of the Old Testament book of Hosea! Such images of the 'deviant South' were no doubt an influence on later movies like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

In *Something Weird* (1967) a deformed psychic gets cured by a creepy old witch who demands love in return. Thankfully, she morphs into a pretty young starlet for most of the time... only to switch back to a hideous, cackling crone mid-coitus. Talk about two-faced. *Something Weird*, is a bizarre delight that really earns its title.

Lewis's films can still shock though, and one can only imagine how far early jaws must have dropped at the squelchy gut drilling of *The Wizard of Gore* (1970) or the queasy buttock mashing (complete with salt seasoning) of *The Gore Gore Girls* (1972). Call me mad, but there are solid horror concepts here: like the artist



who finds the perfect shade of red in committing murder in *Colour Me Blood Red* (1965). That sort of one-sentence, quick sell concept must have made drive-in owners eyes (and tills) light up. Roger Corman often sold his movies on the poster, but Lewis could sell his in a single sentence. But, alas, the mischievous and talented Lewis is now gone.

Arrow Video didn't need the news of his death to celebrate him. They'd already started on this massive showcase earlier in the year. So it's poignant to see a cheerful, humble Lewis introducing 14 of his films in a set that's released barely a month after he passed away. Some will feel it's overpriced, since the films are duplicated in both Blu-ray and DVD, but to get 14 of these movies, with a wealth of extras and in HD no less, is a feast worth paying for. Note: The 'Shock and Gore' version of this set, complete with vinyl records, lavish books, sick bags and a severed eye, is now sold out. Probably snapped up by all those *Telegraph* readers, I reckon.

### Fortean Times Verdict

FOR HORROR FANS, IT'S A FEAST WELL WORTH FORKING OUT FOR

**8**



almost to breaking point in the final half-hour, leading to a climax that some viewers may find unsatisfying, as I did; but overall this is an intelligent, probing and gripping thriller which finds a distinctive way to ask questions about the nature of human interaction.

Daniel King

### Fortean Times Verdict

INTRIGUING AND WORTHWHILE  
JAPANESE THRILLER

7

## Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World

Dir Werner Herzog, US 2016

Dogwoof, £15.99 (Blu-ray), £9.99 (DVD)

I can't think of another director who has moved so easily between feature films and documentaries as Werner Herzog. Always a visionary – even now the sheer scale of *Aguirre, Wrath of God* and *Fitzcarraldo* is staggering – he clearly has a restless mind and a desire to understand the world and everything in it. In his latest documentary, he turns his attention to how human life has been changed forever by the development of the Internet.

Herzog's belief is that the Internet has spread so rapidly that it is now almost indivisible from 21st century existence and, therefore, that every facet of that existence is linked to another. Herzog has structured his film as 10 chapters, beginning with the ARPANET link between UCLA and the Stanford Research Institute of 1969, which he presents as the moment of creation. From there, he explores the extraordinary range of benefits the Internet has already brought us, mind-blowing potential future benefits, the misuse of the web, and how our reliance on these inventions might actually bring about the end of the world.

Artificial intelligence looms large in several chapters. Sebastian Thurn, founder of Udacity, talks with certainty about driverless cars and how, as the technology progresses, interconnectivity means that any mistake by an individual car will cause a lesson to be 'learned' not just by every other car in existence but also by every other car yet to come into existence: simply, the original mistake will never be repeated. Joydeep Biswas,

an engineer at Carnegie Mellon, demonstrates a robot football match; as we watch the machines making pinpoint passes and scoring goals of breathtaking skill, Herzog's voiceover explains that none is controlled by a human with a joystick – all are operating independently. Biswas predicts that by 2050 the technology will have developed to the point where a robot team could beat a human one.

In other chapters, we see how the Internet is even connected to the Universe. Elon Musk talks about his company SpaceX, which is working on a project to colonise Mars; it will use satellites to enable long-distance Internet connections, thereby allowing colonists to maintain contact with their home planet. Astronomer Lucianne Walkowicz talks about how a solar storm similar to the Carrington Event of 1859, which badly disrupted telegraph communications, could potentially wreak havoc on Earth's technology-dependent infrastructures. Both this and a chapter about cybersecurity – in which Shawn Carpenter, a security analyst, circumlocutes when dealing with the Titan Rain attacks – demonstrate the weaknesses of a technology humans have so quickly come to be almost wholly dependent on.

It's easy to see why this subject appealed to Herzog: it encompasses both the infinite possibilities for progress and the seeds for mankind's demise. As such, it's hard not to see the spiritual elements in his film: as well as Genesis and Apocalypse, there is good (gamers helping solve molecular puzzles in medical research) and evil (the online dissemination of post-mortem photographs to a bereaved family), and even the supernatural (telepathy). At the film's close, Herzog invites his interviewees to speculate on the possibility that one day the Internet will begin to dream of itself, to develop consciousness of its own. Cosmologist Lawrence Krauss hints at the blurring of the line between technology and myth-making: "It's a fascinating idea. In fact, there was a wonderful science fiction story called 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep' – the robot's dream..." Daniel King

### Fortean Times Verdict

FASCINATING MEDITATION  
ON MAN AND TECHNOLOGY

8

## SHORTS

### CRIMES OF PASSION

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Dual Format)



It's over 30 years since I last saw Ken Russell's censor-baiting, sex-fixated psychodrama, and it hasn't aged well. Average Joe Donny Hopper (Bruce Davison) is struggling with his deteriorating marriage and becomes obsessed with a mysterious woman (Kathleen Turner) leading a double life – high-powered designer by day, prostitute by night. She, in turn, is being pursued by an unhinged priest (Anthony Perkins) who wants to save her soul with the help of a razor-sharp vibrator. Yes, it sounds like a delirious 1980s classic, but in hindsight, it's just a tiresome mess, full of trademark Russell tics signifying nothing and a brash Rick Wakeman score that turns Dvorak's New World symphony into a synth nightmare. Barry Sandler's script obviously set out to explore sexual repression and social hypocrisy, and the scenes exploring Donny's domestic difficulties appear to come from a completely different film based on a marriage counselling handbook. Kudos to Kathleen Turner for a performance that while it can't save the film towers above the rest of it. **DS 4/10**

### SYMPOTMS

BFI, £19.99 (Dual Format)



Believed lost for many years, the BFI's rediscovery and release of *Symptoms* is great news for fans of forgotten British horror films, even if the film itself is a disappointment. Inexplicably, this slice of low-key psychological horror was Britain's official entry at Cannes in 1974 (hardly a vintage year for UK cinema, but why not *Carry On Dick* or *The Beast Must Die*? I hear you ask) Although it's prettily shot, with an effective score by John Scott, its story of two female friends – one recovering from some sort of breakdown – stuck in a remote country house (with *Porridge*'s Peter Vaughan prowling about as a suspicious odd-job man) is plodding and predictable. Spanish director José Ramón Larraz cheekily steals chunks of Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Polanski's *Repulsion*, and doesn't offer much of his own. **DS 5/10**

### TALES THAT WITNESS MADNESS

Fabulous Films, £15.99 (Blu-ray), £9.99 (DVD)



Donald Pleasance guides us around a hi-tech asylum, recounting the tales of his patients in this mis-firing 1970s anthology horror. The stories are okay, but none of them really lands much of a punch. At least there's a decent level of absurdity going on. The segment with Joan Collins is the film's most talked about – the one where her husband starts having an affair with a hunk of dead tree. I also quite enjoyed the first story about a kid and his imaginary friend: an African tiger. It's like *Calvin and Hobbes* with brightly coloured blood splats. **PL 6/10**

### THE INITIATION

Arrow Video, £15.99 (Dual Format)



A young woman and her college buds are stalked by a mysterious killer in a shopping mall, after hours. This Larry Stewart effort was overshadowed by *A Nightmare on Elm Street* at the time. Don't overlook it though: it's a gratifying sorority slasher, not least for the bizarrely beautiful mall locations provided by the Dallas Market Center. **PL 7/10**

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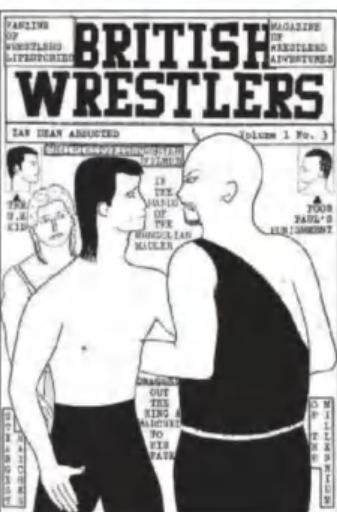
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# letters



## UFO crashes

It is true that if one allows a good deal of speculation, it's possible to come up with other explanations for UFO crashes besides those I discussed in my Forum piece [FT341:55]. For instance, one could imagine that aliens might practise a bizarre form of capital punishment, with miscreants strapped into a doomed saucer with the controls locked for Roswell NM. But I'm not convinced by Trevor Ouellette's idea that crashes might be stage-managed to give us an evolutionary "kick in the pants" [FT345:70]. It certainly doesn't seem to be working very well, and I imagine an intelligent alien could probably come up with a more effective scheme. Likewise, I think we can discard Mike Prentis's assertion that UFOs have been brought down by radar [FT345:71]. Firstly, if this were true, UFOs should be crashing frequently all over the place, and secondly, who would take to the skies using a propulsion system that went belly-up when exposed to something as rudimentary (relatively speaking) as radar?

**Roger Musson**  
Edinburgh

## Mars myth

"The world's first alien life form containment facility is under discussion in Europe as the European Space Agency (ESA) looks at ways to bring a sample back to Earth from Mars." (*Horizon magazine online*, 13 Sept 2016). I came across an urban legend in a guidebook to Mars back in the late 1990s, which claimed there was a "shootdown" treaty between the US and the Soviet Union, in which both agreed to shoot down (vaporise with a missile) any probe or bits of probe returning from Mars entering the Earth's atmosphere, on the grounds that it might contain deadly germs that would wipe out all life of Earth. There was even concern that with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the chaos then in Russia, it wouldn't be honoured. I checked with the UK Space Centre in Leicester, and they assured me this was total pants and none of it was true.

**Matt Salusbury**  
Dunwich, Suffolk

## Simulacra corner



This striking image of the Devil in a ribeye steak was sent to Fortean Towers last March... but we have mislaid the name of the sender. If it's you, please let us know. *We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to [sieveking@forteantimes.com](mailto:sieveking@forteantimes.com).*

## Confused extraterrestrials

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, UFOs were picking up people with famous names. They appeared to be trying to find out what was going on with these famous individuals but never picked up the correct person. For example: on 30 September 1960, *The Flintstones* premiered on national TV. Hill and rubble seem to go together. Barney and Betty Rubble were stars of this cartoon series and as the new season was about to begin in September 1961, Betty and Barney Hill were famously abducted by aliens near

Lancaster, New Hampshire. A few miles south of Manchester, New Hampshire, is a town named Bedford. The Rubbles lives in Bedrock.

**Martin Piechota**  
Dupont, Pennsylvania

## Rumoured suicides

The single most interesting suggestion in the article on the "House of suicides" [FT342:34] is the doubt about the very suicides that gave the house its sinister reputation. The author speculates on a supposed double homicide

of 1954 [rather than 1934, typo?] being hushed up. This sounds far fetched. But 20 deaths – suicides, homicides, accidents or whatnot – over any length of time, all being silenced? The solution is obvious: they never happened. It's just rumour. And despite what's said on page 45 in a different context, a legend can perfectly well start by itself.

• A very minor note about the dismissal of Zecharia Sitchin [FT342:59]: though people have lived in Australia for tens of thousands of years, Polynesia was settled far later, well after the Sumerian heydays.

• Paul Whyte complains about the common view of conspiracy theorists [FT342:73]. He airs one false fact regarding the term "conspiracy theorist": that it was invented by the CIA to ridicule people who didn't buy the 'official' explanation of the JFK assassination. This etymology was invented a few years ago and has since become popular among conspiracy theorists. It is not only wrong but easily disproven: examples of the term "conspiracy theorist" can be found in texts well before the 1960s. It has been traced back to 1870 (there's possibly older sources), and it has always been disparaging. For a full report, see Robert Blaskiewicz: "Nope, it was always already wrong", *Skeptical Inquirer*, 8 Aug 2013.

**Peter Olausson**  
Gothenburg, Sweden



"With him there, we'll have no chance of catching any fish."

TONY HUSBAND

## Foreign ghosts

My mother is a sceptic when it comes to ghosts and cites a supposed lack of any French ghosts, especially given the county's gory history, as proof that it's all made up. Certainly if ghosts exist you would expect them to exist in any region where humans have lived and died. A quick search online will of course quickly reveal that there are indeed French ghost stories, although from my limited research I do get the general impression that they are not as much a part of the national consciousness as they are in the UK. I myself do believe in ghosts, but am fairly certain that (as with other fortean fields) the majority of stories are that: stories – mostly to drum up tourists, hence the huge numbers of country inns/taverns in the UK with ghosts that appear in the cellar after hours. Perhaps our European cousins are simply not as keen to encourage ghost stories and so they have far less 'noise' in their data? Or do other readers know of any good studies comparing the cultural 'acceptance' of ghosts being a real thing with what we might call authentic sightings around the world?

**Calvin Graham**

*By email*

## Mexican spectres

Re Simon Young's "figures on Souther Fell" [FT345:29], he might be interested to learn that similar, if not the exact same, figures have been observed (and photographed: see picture above) climbing the Popocatepetl volcano in Mexico. According to mountain climber Guillermo Vidales, mountain crews in the area "saw humanoid creatures measuring about 2.5m [8ft 2in] in height at an altitude of over 4,000m [13,100ft]. Seen on more than one occasion, the beings appeared to be thin and brown and not wearing any visible clothing. They showed amazing speed and skill," climbing the glacier in 10 minutes; a trek that, according to Vidales, takes trained mountaineers three to four hours. The team also found that the creatures left very large, unhuman-like, footprints that had an extra dewclaw-like digit, growing out of the heel, for "propulsive



support". See Paul Seaburn, "Giant Beings Seen Rapidly Climbing Mexican Volcano", <http://mysteriousuniverse.org/2015/01/giant-beings-seen-rapidly-climbing-mexican-volcano/>. Additional video footage of the creatures can be viewed at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPr5rYriT4M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPr5rYriT4M).

• Apparently, part of a *Mysterious Universe* article got tagged onto the end of my letter about UFO crashes [FT345:70]. The letter should've ended at the word 'ticket'. Hotmail, I guess, just likes you to see the link that's being referenced and includes it as a footnote at the bottom of the page. I think this got transcribed into my letter. It's no big deal, but I have never experienced a missing time incident.

**Trevor Ouellette**

*Ontario, Canada*

## Sovereign Citizens

Aspects of Noel Rooney's description of the "Legal Name Fraud" [FT343:5] sounded oddly familiar to me. Many of the ideas resemble those of a strange but apparently growing sub-culture in the US: A hodgepodge group of far right anti-government extremists, survivalists, white supremacists, and miscellaneous conspiracy theorists called the Sovereign Citizen movement. I don't claim to understand completely what they're all about (a quick Google search on 'sovereign citizen' will give you plenty more); but having read up a bit on the underlying philosophy (if I can call it that), I think I can safely say the gist of it goes something like this:

The US Constitution guarantees US citizens a number of 'freedoms' that can be construed (through some convoluted logic) to include freedom from taxation and from submission to certain

forms of civil authority (up to and including such mundane things as traffic laws). The contention of the Sovereign Citizen theory is that in order to impose these things on the citizenry, government came up with a plan to create a fictional legal entity (often called a 'straw man' in the movement's lingo) that is a stand-in for an actual person, and upon which the government can then 'legally' impose its will. Reference to this straw man, rather than to the actual human, is indicated by a recipient's name spelled in ALL UPPER CASE on official documents.

As long as people remain unaware of this bit of governmental sleight-of-hand and obey the injunctions toward the straw man, everything works out fine for the powers that be. Now, according to the promoters of Sovereign Citizenship (who, perhaps not so incidentally, often offer paid seminars in how to go about this), a person can formally repudiate the straw man connection by sending opt-out letters to the right folks in the government. Once this is done, the person becomes a 'sovereign citizen' and is (theoretically) no longer subject to most governmental mandates (taxation in particular).

The actual process seems to vary from telling to telling, and is slippery enough that the promoters aren't generally held to task when it doesn't work. They can simply claim the sovereign citizenship seeker didn't do it right. Conversely, some folks buy into this notion so fully that they don't feel the need even to engage in formally 'opting out' and simply refuse to comply when confronted with governmental demands they don't want to obey. This might all be laughable if it weren't that some folks who claim sovereign citizenship take it seriously enough to violently resist submis-

sion to civil authority (e.g. shooting a police officer who stopped them for a traffic violation).

**Stephen Posey**

*By email*

## Futile project

Why are humans more interested in what they cannot see than in what they can? All that obsession with what might be out there in space. Just look in the garden and in the darkest corners of the cupboards. It is all there. Insects, arachnids and every other kind of 'alien' are living and surviving before your blinkered eyes. ET is no more interesting than a worm writhing across the grass. A rocket is nothing to a bee flying from flower to flower laden with pollen. The imagined domestic coming and goings of other worlds pale into insignificance when a colony of ants is observed going about their daily lives.

Other planets have nothing more to offer than the most barren desert on Earth; even less when you factor in the lack of breathable air. So why the interest? We do not know all the answers to the puzzles of this world yet, and who knows what the countless billions wasted on space programmes and 'exploration' over the last six decades could have been better used for? With elephants and other species on the verge of extinction from poachers and climate change, sending a load of metal into space to look at a bit of rock millions of miles away is an object lesson in futility.

**Stefan Badham**

*Paulsgrove, Hampshire*

## Kipling and the Masons

I enjoyed David Barrett's article [FT344:14-15] on the exhibition in Freemason's Hall (where I was once involved in filming a commercial), but I do think that the author of the 'piece of doggerel' celebrating the inclusivity of the Masons should be mentioned – it was Rudyard Kipling who was himself a Freemason, first joining the Masons in Lahore in 1886, although he seems to have ceased to be an active member in 1889.

The lines are from his poem, 'The Mother Lodge' which finishes with:

*We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square,  
An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother-Lodge out there!*

Freemasonry, with its special signs and secret brotherhood, seems to have appealed to him, because it appears in several of his poems – a knowledge of masonry would, for instance, be helpful in understanding 'My New Cut Ashlar' where readers can only too easily think of a stick of ash wood, rather than the stone Kipling means, and stories – Kim's soldier father was a Mason, and the Masons pay for his education when he finds his way to his father's regiment, but it ultimately proves fatal to 'The Man Who Would be King' (perhaps because he misuses the rituals). And surely Kipling is the only author to have brought Freemasonry and the fans of Jane Austen together – in his short story 'The Janeites'.

**Tina Rath**  
*London*

"Over the last three centuries Freemasonry has added to the richness of our language" [David V Barrett, FT344:14] – but it probably can't take credit for coining the term 'hoodwink', meaning to blindfold (and the more modern use of the word to mean trick or deceive). Hoodwink has been in print since at least 1562 and appears in *The Tempest*, written about 1611, where Caliban says: "The prize I'll bring thee to shall hoodwink this mischance".

**Martin Stubbs**  
*London*

## Dragonflies, maybe?

I was intrigued to read the letter from Brenda Ray [FT344:73] commenting on a letter from me back in 1997 [FT237:77]. What she saw as a child does closely resemble the 'insect' I saw. But mine had more of a dome-shaped head, which was black with a small black 'ruff' around its neck. It had satin-like 'ribbons' hanging from this ruff, which made me think it was an actual arrow. They were shiny black and red about the size



of the insect of approx 6in (15cm) long. I never thought about it being malevolent, but it did follow me around the back of the house. I had given up on anyone else ever having seen anything remotely similar, so now I am more curious as to what this thing was. Surely somebody must know what it was. As I recall, my old neighbour was the only one who believed what I saw and he said it was a "flying arrow" and he hadn't seen one for 40 years. Whether he was just humouring a child, I don't know. I guess I'll never know as he was in his eighties then.

**Ruth Summersides**  
*By email*

Was what Brenda Ray saw two swallows noisily fighting or mating on the wing? Four of their tail streamers, rather than two, might account for the tendril effect.

**Richard George**  
*St Albans, Hertfordshire*

I hate to damage a superb piece of fortean oddness, but I have a horrible feeling I have a straightforward explanation for both Brenda Ray's frightening insect and Ruth Summerside's before her [FT344:73]. They both experienced a rarely seen, but not uncommon event – a pair of the larger British dragonflies mating on the wing. The Emperor Dragonfly – Britain's largest – can grow to around 80-85mm (3.5in) in length, and other more common species, such as the Brown Hawker, are not far behind. They often fly 'in tandem', in various strange positions, either prior to attempted

egg-laying or during mating, and can be quite oblivious to their surroundings while doing so. This would certainly give the impression of an insect six inches long and the combined total of 12 legs and eight wings does indeed seem like "black whirring strands". Dragonfly wings are much more robust than you might imagine, with a weird crispy texture a little like old-fashioned lavatory paper. Two of them together brushing past vegetation, or indeed, the brick of a house, could well make a surprisingly loud, dry, rattling rustle as described.

The waste ground areas, with nearby trees and shrubs, would provide a habitat for them, particularly if there was also standing water, even if only just a small pond or flooded gravel pit. Like butterflies, dragonflies need to be warm in order to fly well, and they would be attracted to the warm brickwork of Brenda's house. Given the well-known 'UFO report' tendency of a surprised observer to slightly overestimate sizes and sensations, I believe this to be a likely answer. I have myself occasionally seen them 'flying united' like this and can confirm that it is a weird, and mildly disturbing, sight. However, as a dragonfly 'enthusiast', I must point out that it is all appearance – they neither sting nor bite!

**Paul Pearson**  
*Worksop, Nottinghamshire*

## Bog butter

My heart goes out to the unfortunate gentleman [FT330:17] whose

head was excavated in Heslington in 2009 with an intact brain inside. The conventional explanation for a find like this would be that he was an executed criminal, a captured warrior, or a religious sacrifice; but I like to imagine that there could be an utterly different reason. Iron Age society was sophisticated in many ways, and the preservative powers of oxygen-starved pits may have been well known to the sages of the day. What if they ran a lucrative business on the lines of 20th-century cryonics? A dying man might well give them all his possessions in exchange for a chance to be revived sometime in the future, when medical science had advanced far enough to revive him and cure his disease. I don't find this any more ludicrous than the claims of the cryonicists, and if the body were to be preserved longer than a couple of generations, I suppose being buried in a bog would be as good a bet as being frozen – if not rather better. The fact that only his head was preserved probably means that he went for the budget option. After all, if medical science has advanced far enough to reanimate the head, it will be able to graft it to a suitable body (cryonicists argue in the same way). The tragedy is that the man was excavated too early. If he could have lain undisturbed 100 more years or so, medical science probably would be able to reanimate him. Now he's probably spent the family fortune in vain.

After writing this, I was surprised to find a *New Scientist* Feedback item (9 July 2016, p.56), lending further credibility to this idea: "Previously *The Irish Times* hinted enigmatically that it was 'not unusual' to discover lumps of millennia-old butter hidden in bogs (25 June). 'The prevailing theory is that, being at an evenly cold temperature, bogs were used in ancient times much as we use refrigerators today,' writes Ian Napier. 'Personally, however, I suspect they didn't know what else to do with it until the invention of sliced bread.' Oh well, if butter keeps, so should a brain. I can well imagine an Iron Age Matt Groening coming up with an iron-age version of *Futurama*..."

**Nils Erik Grande**  
*Oslo, Norway*

## Red Giants

Describing the plot of Olaf Stapleton's *Last and First Men* (1930), Alan Murdie writes: "...when the Sun has swollen to a red giant, consuming the inner planets" [FT240:44]. This is a fallacy. Counterintuitively, stars contract when they gain mass (e.g. by attracting and absorbing matter from other objects, or from the interstellar gas and dust clouds through which they occasionally pass). They then become hotter, brighter, bluer, denser and more active as they become more compact and, potentially, evolve into white dwarfs. This extra mass also increases the strength of their gravity, so any planets around them will be pulled into closer orbits. Those planets will therefore heat up, too, because they'll receive more and more radiant heat from their increasingly closer and hotter star. It's a form of global warming for which mankind cannot be blamed!

Conversely, and equally counterintuitively, stars expand when they lose mass (e.g. by ejecting matter, or by passing into a more rarefied region of space, or by simply running out of fuel). They then become cooler, dimmer, redder, less dense and less active as they swell and, potentially, evolve into red giants. This loss of mass weakens their gravity, so any planets around them will drift into more distant orbits. Those planets will therefore cool down rapidly, since they'll receive less and less radiant heat from their increasingly distant and cooling star.

There is evidence of this process occurring in our own Solar System. For instance, Jean Picard measured the Sun during the 'Maunder Minimum' between 1645 and 1715. Its diameter then was greater than today's diameter of a hotter, more active, Sun. The Sun's total energy output declined dramatically then; solar activity plummeted; sunspots almost disappeared; and the Little Ice Age commenced in northern Europe. That confirms the relationship between expansion and cooling.

So the more mass a star loses, the bigger it grows – but the farther away and colder its planets become. Hence there's little chance of planets being

"consumed", or swallowed up and cooked, by the expanding extremities of a main sequence star as it evolves into a red giant. It's more likely that any remaining inhabitants of those planets would freeze to death!

**Ian H Machell**  
Staverton, Wiltshire

## Worcestershire predator

In response to your report on strange beasts in the Yorkshire Wolds and South Worcestershire [FT342:4], on 23 July I visited the Kinnersley, High Green, and Croome area between Worcester and Upton-upon-Severn. I was mostly looking for tracks and prints in mud pans and at the edge of pools where animals might be expected to drink, especially in the prevailing hot weather. I didn't find any unusual or large tracks, spoor or scent markings in the area. The only tracks I saw were ungulates (deer and sheep) and one very small dog/fox print. The only live wild mammal I saw in the area was a yearling female roe deer on Pirton Ridge.

However, in Pirton Old Park, I did find (at GR 387381-246879) the days-old remains – mostly feathers – of a dead swan. This supported the predator idea, but the kill was within the capability of a large fox. More spectacularly, nearby I found a large dead sheep, a black face ewe (at GR 387498-246987), which had had all its neck completely eaten away – down to the vertebrae – and its left front leg missing. The kill was fresh – there were flies but no rotting smell – in spite of the hot weather (about 28°C/82°F). The blood on the wool was fresh and red – I would estimate less than 12 hours old. There was hardly any blood on the ground and no sign of the missing limb having been dragged away. My inference is that the sheep was killed by a powerful gripping attack on the throat and that the predator involved was strong enough to suffocate the sheep and to sever and carry away the entire leg without disturbing the ground. There was no damage (or excision) to the rear of the animal and no unusual

footprints on the nearby muddy margin of Pirton Pond, no more than 10m (33ft) away. I took about 15 photos of the dead sheep but my camera was stolen when I fell asleep on the way back to London. I informed both nearest neighbouring homeowners of my find and they said the sheep belonged to the local Park Farm. Neither was surprised or alarmed and both indicated that similar kills had happened in the recent past and one noted that multiple sightings of a 'black panther' had occurred but had not been reported in the media. I believe this kill to be confirmation of a large predatory carnivore in the area and verification of the Ingrams' report. The Ingrams told a clear story, with convincing detail, and are merely (to be polite) a bit bad at drawing animals. While I don't feel a big cat hunt is justified, I think local people should be protective of pets and children, especially at dawn and dusk.

**Alan Lewis**  
London

## Roman fugitives?

I was working in the northeast of Scotland from 1994 to 1997, principally in Banffshire and Aberdeenshire. My job required lots of night driving and speaking to lots of people. Local papers were full of big cat sightings at the time. Locally, it was called the "muckle cat", "muckle" being a Scottish word for *big*. The cat was usually described as black, panther-like, about the size of a big Labrador dog or bigger. This beast (or beasts) was/were bold and often seen in daylight near quite populated areas. One sighting at least involved a threatened daylight attack on a villager. There were frequent sightings of the beast in a field surrounded by scrub or forest land. This part of Scotland is primarily rural with a landscape of fields, hill farms, woodland and heathland, with plentiful rabbits and pheasants. There, a big cat would not starve.

I never saw the Big Cat but kept a keen lookout, whilst hearing of many sightings. However, one description sticks in my mind. My landlord, whose big house was surrounded by forest and fields,

described seeing – from an upstairs window one January morning in the late 1980s or early 90s – a black panther with a pheasant in its mouth. He raced to the field but the creature had vanished and there were no footprints or spoor. He looked for the beast often but never saw it again. This man was a farmer with a keen local knowledge; he was not prone to adoration or exaggeration. To him it was a black panther, and I believed him.

I talked to another local man who in his youth had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. He set trap lines and was also a keen hunter. Pumas (mountain lions/cougars) were familiar to him and in his many years of trapping had never seen or heard of a black or melanistic specimen. He was sceptical of local stories because he thought there should be good evidence: fur, tracks, spoor and even camera evidence. He also wondered why such a supposedly common beast would never leave its carcase. What did he think the Muckle Cat was? He didn't know but had never seen one himself.

Since the 'black panther' can, zoologically, only be a melanistic version of the jaguar or leopard, Britain's unique ABC must be naturally and commonly melanistic, unlike the jaguar and leopard which are rarely so. If the beast is physically real and not from another dimension, I propose the following hypothesis. The Romans built amphitheatres in Britain, including parts of Scotland. Did gladiators fight beasts in Britain's amphitheatres? We know they fought 'Caledonian bears' (European brown bears); could they also have fought imported 'panthers'? Black leopards were available to them from Asia and Africa and would have been impressive beasts in the gladiatorial ring. Could these black leopards have escaped or been released into the British countryside as Roman influence waned?

As far as I know, the Muckle Cat is still seen in the Scottish northeast in areas around Huntly, Macduff, Aberchirder and Banff. It is almost always black.

**Tom Bryan**  
Kelso, Scotland

# it happened to me...

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## Her last walk

I used to work in a care home for elderly people with Alzheimer's and dementia. During one night shift between 2pm and 3am, whilst I was sitting in the lounge with another two staff members at 'dinner', one of the residents walked into the room. She came in as if from the other side of the building to that in which she resided. While odd enough for comment it wasn't a cause for concern. I was nominated to follow and usher her back to bed, something we had to do on many occasions with this resident. I followed her through the large dining room to the L-shaped corridor, off which her bedroom was situated. I turned the corner but she had vanished. Assuming she'd gone into someone else's room (another regular occurrence), I checked the three prior to hers, but she wasn't there. I found her in her own bed, which was odd because she usually needed guiding and helping into it. When I got closer I realised that she had passed away. I ran back to my co-workers who thought I was joking – they'd just seen her five minutes ago, after all. They were in utter disbelief upon seeing her. There simply wasn't the time, likelihood or ability for that matter, for her to have climbed into bed and died in the few minutes it took me to check three other bedrooms. Obviously we were fully charged that night, convinced the spirit of the lady had come to inform us of her departure, but we never really spoke of it again. Death goes hand in hand with such a job and I've worked in four such places, that being the only time something eerie/unexplained has happened. Was it her spirit, or was it mere coincidence that she died immediately on the one occasion she was able to locate and get back into her own bed?

**Steven Robertson**

*By email*

## Dreaming of asthma

In a recent lucid dream I was at my sister's house near York. My mother was there, inexplicably



smoking a cigarette (she doesn't smoke). We were indoors and I couldn't breathe. I tried my inhaler, to no avail. I went outside, but this didn't help. I tried the inhaler again but still couldn't get any relief. I was suffocating. I walked down the lane a little to try and get some breeze, but it didn't help, so I went back to the porch where I had been standing. I tried my inhaler again and I realised – no, heard a voice, my own, but stronger, more forceful, outside of my head as if shouted: "Alice! This is a dream!"

I shook myself, trying to wake, but found I was back at the door. This time, it was even more real; I could feel my lungs contracting and the grain of the wooden door under my hand. I tried my inhaler again, without effect. The voice again: "No! You are still dreaming. The inhaler doesn't work because this is not real." I shook myself again, trying to wake... but I was still at the door, and this time I could feel the breeze on my face and the inhaler in my hand, plastic warm and metal cold. I was really suffocating now. "Alice! Wake up! Wake up!" boomed the voice. "You need your inhaler, you are suffocating! The one you hold doesn't work because it's not real!" Finally I awoke, choking, and took my 'real' inhaler a lot before I could breathe freely.

So why was one part of me trying to keep me asleep, trying to convince me what was happening was real despite me having a serious asthma attack in my sleep? And why did my own subconscious talk – indeed yell – at me in the third person? Was it me? Probably, but why was one me trying to kill me? The dream was intensely

vivid, and kept getting so real I couldn't work out how to escape it. Has anyone had a similar experience?

**Alice Hepple**  
*Derby*

## Wilful waking

Regarding "Hutton's Paradox" [FT326:71-72] concerning realisation one is dreaming: this happened to me when I was in my early teens and involved walking in a wood and finding a clearing with a large stagnant pool mostly covered with duckweed. As I looked into it I saw the body of my favourite cousin looking sightlessly up at me. Although it was obviously distressing, as I had a crush on him as well, I was very frightened indeed and tried to "escape" from the scene but appeared to be prevented. Suddenly – a bit like *Alice in Wonderland* – I realised that it was a dream and that all I needed to do was to wake up to escape. As I struggled to do this, I had the idea to visualise the customary view from my pillow when I normally awoke and, as this came into my mind's eye, I awoke.

This is my only experience of knowing that I was dreaming. The rest of the time I don't. I suffered for years from depression and was very unhappy but for the last couple of decades have been successfully medicated and my life has taken off. However, as well as dreams where my life is frustrated and speeded up by circumstances beyond my control (which I think refers to the present) I get new takes on my miserable past. Oddly it does not occur to me that I am seeing people who were never

juxtaposed in real life and places which I have never seen before which I dub with the identity of houses I've lived in; offices I have worked in; familiar locations, it never seems to occur to me that I am dreaming. When I awake the dismalness of the happenings remain with me. As I get on with the day, like most dreams, they fade away but I imagine that in the past they contributed to the continuation of my depression.

Last night I was having a frustration dream waiting for a bus in the rain to go to visit my mother and then meet my ex-husband. It didn't occur to me that my mother had been dead for 20 years and that I had left my ex-husband shortly after. But it did occur to me that I had left my iPhone 6 at home and could not call the latter to tell him I was delayed (prior to 1995?). I usually do, in reality, forget to take it with me as I don't suffer from the modern mobile-fixation.

**Vermilion (pseudonym)**

## Nocturnal voices

This has probably been tried before, but I wonder if *FT* readers might want to give it a go and possibly relate their findings to *FT*? This is what I do. I often wear a nightcap in bed. This covers the back and sides of my head and my forehead and eyes, leaving a gap between the tip of my nose and my mouth. I pretend to go to sleep, but in reality I listen closely to the night sounds around me. It is amazing how many little sounds can be heard. I have occasionally heard odd low whispers. The whispers always seem to be fairly close to me. It is not anything outside my room and the place where I live is always very quiet at night. My theory is that the spirits of the dead constantly move around us and watch and observe us. That is a slightly troubling thought, I know.

By wearing a nightcap that covers most of my face they can't tell if I am awake or not and by pretending to be asleep they simply assume that I am asleep and begin to talk. It doesn't happen all the time, but when it does it is interesting to experience.

**Nick Smith**  
*Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire*

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# Why Fortean?



**F**ortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Forteantimes** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

**FT** toes no party line.

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# PHENOMENOMIX

## ELIPHAS LEVI

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

INTRODUCING  
ELIPHAS LEVI  
(REAL NAME =  
ALPHONSE LOUIS  
CONSTANT-  
1810 - 1875).  
NOT MUCH READ  
THESE DAYS,  
BUT IN THE  
19TH CENTURY  
HE WAS ONE OF  
THE MOST FAMOUS  
OCCULTISTS  
IN EUROPE!



HE WAS A HUGE INFLUENCE  
ON THE ORDER OF THE  
GOLDEN DAWN, MADAME  
BLAVATSKI, AND, OF COURSE...  
—ALEISTER CROWLEY!



LEVI/CONSTANT  
WAS BORN INTO  
A POOR FAMILY  
—HIS FATHER WAS  
A SHOEMAKER—  
BUT HE WAS A  
BRIGHT BOY,  
AND BEGAN TO  
TRAIN FOR THE  
ROMAN  
CATHOLIC  
PRIESTHOOD...



HIS AMBITION  
FOR HOLY  
ORDERS FADED  
WHEN HE MET  
AN OLD COUPLE,  
THE GANNEAUS,  
WHO INITIATED  
HIM INTO  
WITCHCRAFT!



HE VISITED  
ENGLAND,  
WHERE HE  
MADE FRIENDS  
WITH THE  
POPULAR  
NOVELIST  
EDWARD  
BULWER-  
LYTTON!

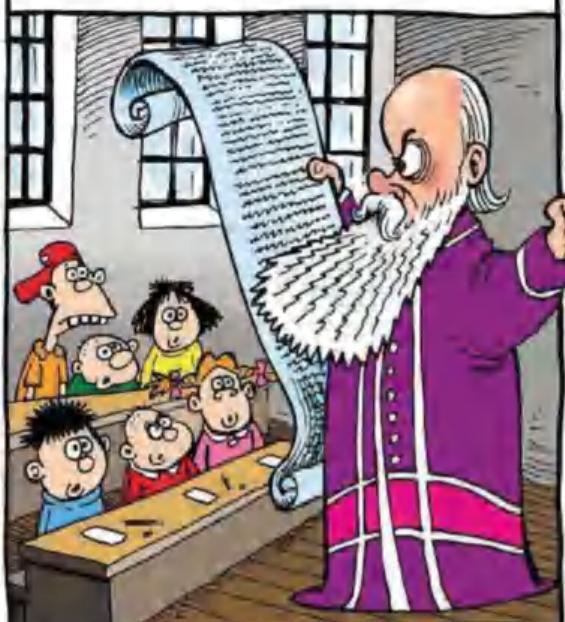


DURING HIS STAY IN  
ENGLAND, SOMEONE  
CHALLENGED HIM  
TO RAISE THE SPIRIT  
OF THE ANCIENT  
MAGICIAN APOLLONIUS  
OF TYANA!  
HE FASTED FOR THREE  
WEEKS BEFORE THE  
CEREMONY...



...OR SO  
HE SAID...

BACK IN FRANCE, HE BEGAN  
TO TEACH MAGIC TO EAGER  
PAYING STUDENTS... AND HE  
WROTE AT LENGTH ABOUT  
THE (ALLEGED) DEMON-DEITY  
OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR-



BAPHOMET!



TO THIS DAY, YOU CAN FIND  
A COPY OF THE FAMOUS  
DRAWING BY  
ELIPHAS LEVI IN THE  
STANDARD TAROT DECK!

# COMING NEXT MONTH



## OUT OF THE SHADOWS

WONDERS FROM THE MUSEUM OF  
WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC



## FACES IN THE WINDOW

WINDOWPANE GHOSTS AND  
LIGHTNING DAGUERROTIPIES



ALIEN STRUCTURES,  
MONSTERS VS BOATS,  
THE CUTTY WREN,  
AND MUCH MORE...

# FORTEAN TIMES 348

ON SALE 8 DEC 2016

# STRANGE DEATHS

## UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Caitlin Clavette, an art teacher from Boston, Massachusetts, was driving to work on Interstate 93 on 12 February 2016 when a dislodged manhole cover weighing more than 200lb (90kg) went airborne and crashed through her windshield, hitting her on the chest and killing her. The Honda SUV continued to move forward until it hit a crash barrier. State police were examining the manhole cover, which covered a storm drainage system, to determine if it had "excessive wear, deformation, or any other characteristics" that could have contributed to it going airborne. In 2007, a man was seriously injured when a storm drain grate flew off the roadway and struck his vehicle on Route 128 in Westwood, Massachusetts. This particular type of IFO (identified flying object) was first noticed in these pages over 25 years ago. Odis R Sitton was killed in exactly the same way as Ms Clavette in Rochester, New York, on 30 August 1989 (FT54:6). For further examples, see FT57:29, 68:18, 86:10, 98:54, 159:9). [AP] 12 Feb; Sun, 14 Feb 2016.

The phenomenon also occurs in the UK: according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), there were nine reports of exploding or burning manholes across the UK in 2011, 31 in 2012, 51 in 2013, and 64 in the first half of 2014 alone. Clearly a growing menace. *D.Mail*, 7 July 2014.

An Ohio woman from Dayton, Ohio, was struck and killed by a train while looking for a mythical creature that allegedly tricks people into climbing onto a railroad trestle. Roquel Bain, 26, died of multiple blunt-force trauma injuries about 7:30pm on 23 April 2016 when she was struck and then knocked from the trestle in Kentucky. Bain and her boyfriend had been visiting Louisville to take a ghost tour of the disused Waverly Hills Sanitorium, but the couple first decided to investigate the Goatman urban legend. "It's been around for years," said Denise Harris, who lives nearby. "The Goatman is supposed to come out when [people] climb up on the trestle and cross it."

Bain and her boyfriend walked onto the Pope Lick Trestle – where the half-man, half-goat creature had allegedly been spotted – but were surprised by a train. Realising they would not be able to cross the trestle in time, they decided to hang off the sides until the train passed. Bain was not able to move quickly enough to avoid the train – which struck her and hurled her 80-100ft (24-30m) to the ground below. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

There are several legends about the mythical creature. Some say it is the offspring of a local farmer who had unnatural relations with his livestock, while others say the Goatman was a satanic farmer whose animal sacrifices gave him the power to live forever but doomed him to walk the trestle as a hideous beast. Another legend claims the Goatman was part of a travelling circus in the 1800s – until lightning struck a train and killed everyone aboard, except for the freakish creature. *Rawstory.com*, 25 April 2016.

Here's an unusual way to go, recorded in a vintage clipping recently received. On 14 June 1998, Daniel Wyman, 29, and a friend tossed a M-250

firecracker into Fox Lake, Illinois, to kill fish. A gust of wind blew their 14ft (4m) aluminium boat over the firecracker. This then blew a hole in the boat, which sank about 100 yards from shore. An M-250 is equivalent to a quarter stick of dynamite. Wyman was drowned while his friend swam to safety. *Scranton (PA) Tribune*, 17 June 1998.

The Cameroonian Muslim captain of a boat taking migrants from Morocco to Spain, referred to as Alain NB, blamed the onset of storms "on the prayers led by a Christian pastor" and threw him and five Christian passengers off the boat to drown. On 5 December 2014, sea rescue services in Almeria found 29 survivors on board the 10m (33ft)-long inflatable craft drifting without a motor. In September this year, the captain went on trial in Spain. *D.Telegraph*, 20 Sept 2016.

Charles McKenzie, 67, and his wife Dorothy, 63, a couple from Nova Scotia, died on 11 November 2015 while having sex in a hot tub when he had a heart attack and trapped her under the water. The tragedy happened at a hotel in Playa del Carmen, on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, where their only daughter Jill was due to be married on a beach nearby two days later. *Sun*, 13 Nov; *Times*, 14 Nov 2015.

The most trivial incident can sometimes be lethal. Lucinda Smith, 43, a solicitor from Billericay in Essex, scratched her hand while gardening in March 2015. Three days later her fingers and arm became red and swollen, she was vomiting and in great pain. In hospital she was diagnosed with sepsis and put on intravenous antibiotics, but later suffered organ failure and died. More than 44,000 people die from sepsis every year, often because symptoms are hard to distinguish from those of less serious viral conditions. *D.Telegraph*, 4 Oct 2016.

A 22-year-old Australian died after being bitten by a redback spider in what may turn out to be the first such death since 1955, a year after the anti-venom was introduced. Jayden Burleigh from Sydney was bitten while walking on the north coast of New South Wales. An abscess formed under his left arm, affecting his glands, and he was in hospital for four days. He was discharged on 7 April 2016 and given antibiotics, but died two days later. At the time of the reports, it was unclear whether or not he had been treated with the anti-venom. Redbacks, a relative of the black widow, are found across Australia and bites occur frequently. More than 250 people are given anti-venom each year. Bites cause pain, sweating and vomiting, but serious illness does not develop for at least three hours, allowing most victims time to seek medical attention. *Guardian*, *D.Telegraph*, 13 April 2016.

Other recent deaths-by-spider include charity worker Alison Lane, 54, who had a heart attack as a result of septic shock from a spider bite – possibly a brown recluse – in Mexico in July 2015. Around the same time, scaffolder Simon Tongue, 50, had a heart attack after an allergic reaction, probably from a false widow bite on an Isle of Wight building site. *D.Telegraph*, 20 July, 4 Dec 2015.

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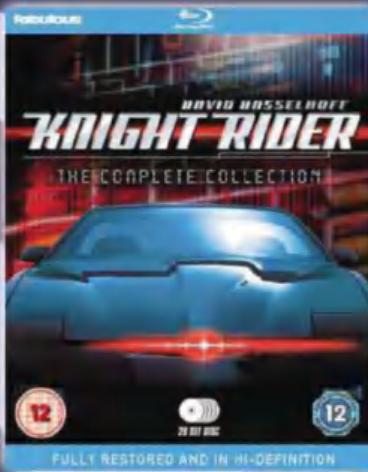
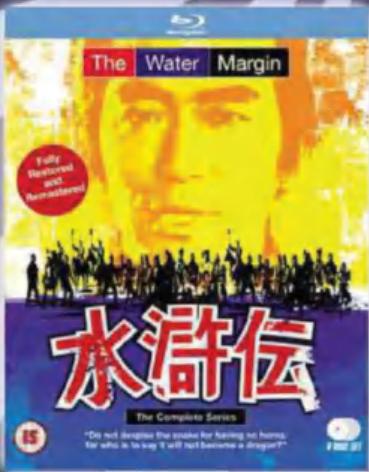
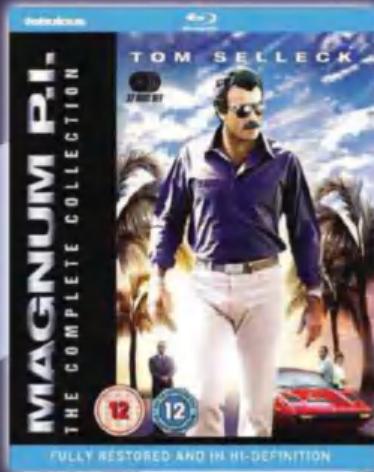
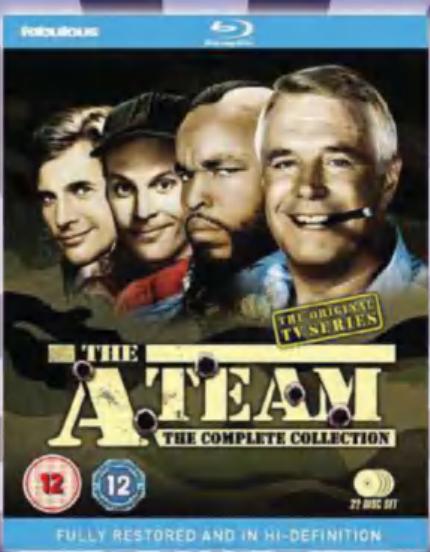
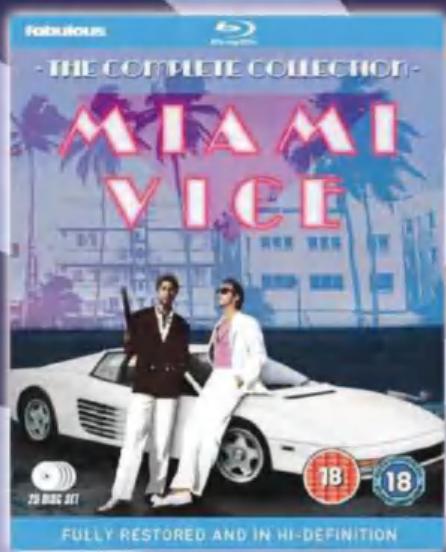
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